

RED HAND:*

OR, THE CRUISERS OF THE ENGLISH CHANNEL.

A STORY OF THE OLDEN TIME.

BY F. CLINTON BARRINGTON.

CHAPTER VII.

A FUGITIVE'S ESCAPE.

WHEN Guilford left the threshold of the cottage to take his way towards Castle Vane, in order to obtain a final interview with the beautiful and high-born maiden who had given him the preference of her pure affections, he walked for some minutes at the quick, impetuous step which his agitated feelings prompted. But after losing sight of the gate of the hut, and he had come upon the white sand beach, on which the moonbeams shone like silver, and upon the hard, marble-like floor of which the sparkling waves unrolled themselves like countless blue scrolls edged with pearl, the sweet influences of the scene carried quiet and comparative serenity to his soul. Gradually his footsteps slackened, and at length he came to a full stop and looked off and upward.

"Why should I let a storm rage in my bosom when all nature is so peaceful? The blue skies are soft and fair, and the stars sparkle in them like celestial eyes, looking peace and joy on earth, while the heavens of my soul are clouded, and not a star of hope is glimmering in their wide horizon. Why," he mused, "why should I let mere feelings torture me so that I am more like one bereft of reason at the idea of losing Lady Catharine, than a sane man? Let me borrow peace and calmness from the ocean, the sky, the stars, the whole repose of nature. I will be calm! I will reflect upon all this which has come upon me with firmness and honesty of conviction. My mother is right; I am doing the Lady Catharine wrong by thus holding her affections. My mother is right; she can never look upon me as her husband. She is infatuated. We have both been blind. I will be the first to break the spell. She will respect me the better for it. I will act as becomes a man of honor. She shall never have reason to despise me. But," he added, as he paced

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slowly along the glittering beach, and mechanically picked up a shining shell for her, "how shall I obtain an interview with her without encountering her brother? Not that I fear him; but my hand would shrink from a contact with one so nearly related to her. No doubt he would not hesitate to slay me on the first sight, and therefore did I bring weapons with me; but I shall use them only in self-defence."

He now proceeded along the beach for two hundred yards further, when he came to a jutting part of the cliff, on which the castle stood, which, advancing across the beach some yards into the water, stopped further progress on foot; but on the other side of this projecting wall of the precipice, the beach was continued, broad and white as before, for more than a league, and was the common way taken by the inhabitants along the coast from one hamlet to the other. But as the projecting cliff would have broken off all communication between the two parts of this beach pathway, two small boats had been immemorially kept there, one on one side and the other on the opposite side, for those who passed that way to row themselves round the spur of the rock.

As the path by which Guilford usually visited the garden of the castle lay around the cliff, he now approached the little skiff, which had painted on its stern, "Castle Vane," it being the property of Lord Vane; he suddenly heard a loud shouting of numerous voices in the direction of the hamlet in his rear, and one or two discharges of harquebuses. The voices continued to advance, and looking back with surprise, and wondering at the cause, he saw far distant a single man running along the beach at his fleetest speed. His dark form was distinctly relieved against the white, moon-lit sand. The next moment, not a hundred and fifty yards behind him, came two others, who seemed in hot pursuit. Guilford had already placed his foot in the boat, and held the oar in his hand; but he remained motionless, Complete in Four Numbers.

watching the advance of the fugitive, who each moment was gained upon by his pursuers. He now began to feel an interest in him, as every generous mind will instantly take part with the weakest; and this interest was not lessened when the pursuers increased to seven men, who shouted:—

"The sword of the Lord and Gideon! Death to the son of Anak! Slay the son of Belial!"

"They are covenanters in chase of a loyalist," said Guilford, biting his lip. "If he reaches here in good time, I will agree to save him at all risks."

At this moment he saw the fugitive stop, as his nearest pursuer was not twenty yards off, turn round, and deliberately fire at him. The man fell, and the fugitive once more bounded on his way. This bold and cool act elevated him not a little in the estimation of so brave a spirit as that of Guilford; and he watched the approach of the hunted loyalist, as he supposed him to be, with the deepest solicitude. A second pursuer, coming too near, shared the fate of the first; but a horse-trooper coming at spur-speed on the beach gained so rapidly on him that Guilford felt that, unless the man had another shot left, he would be taken. That he had not, Guilford saw very clearly by the almost superhuman efforts now made by the man to escape from the horseman.

"I have a pistol!" cried Guilford, with admiration. "These troopers are our natural foes. Shall I stand here and see a brave man taken, and perhaps slain before my face? It may be the prince himself for aught I know. I will give him all the aid I can, whosoever he be!"

He then pushed the skiff a little out from the beach, and placed the oars so that they could be used instantly, and then hastened to meet the fugitive, who ran heavily, as if he had nearly lost his wind.

"Courage, my friend!" shouted Guilford. "I have a shot for the trooper! Run a little further, and there is a boat to escape in."

The sound of the encouraging voice of the young fisherman seemed to give new spirits to the pursued stranger, who waved his hand, and came forward at a more vigorous pace. The horseman also increased his speed; and when the fugitive had got within twenty fathoms of the boat, the trooper was alongside of him, with his broad claymore sweeping around above his head, ready to descend upon the neck of the royalist. Guil-

ford was not near enough to aid in warding off the blow, which the fugitive could not do, having, as Guilford perceived, no sword, and but one hand; and the young fisherman brought his huge pistol to bear upon the broad chest of the trooper, and fired it. The man received the ball in his heart, and tumbled from his horse upon the beach, with the sword which he held aloft, ready to aim the blow, lying broken under him in the sand.

"Gallantly done, young man!" cried the fugitive. "You have saved my life!" And he pressed Guilford's hand to his bosom.

"We have not a moment to lose, my lord!" said Guilford. "Quickly, into the boat!"

"I need no urging, my brave fellow," answered the stranger, stepping into the boat, which Guilford in a few seconds rowed out from the land and around the rock, behind which he disappeared as two more horsemen came up to the fallen body of their companion. One of them, with reckless hardihood, spurred his horse into the sea, and compelled him to swim out, as if his rider were resolved to let no obstacle prevent him from capturing the fugitive. But the weight of the man, who was gigantic in size, and the terror of the animal, after a short distance brought on a terrible struggle between life and death; and, in vain attempting to extricate himself from the saddle and stirrups, the man sunk with his horse and disappeared forever.

At this tragical result the other troopers paused on the shore, and as the cliff presented an insurmountable barrier to their further progress, the escape of the fugitive was effectually secured.

"They cannot come after us here," said Guilford, as he drove the boat against the beach beyond the rock.

"And to what brave young man am I indebted for my safety?" asked the stranger, who pressed the hand of the young fisherman with strong emotion.

"I am but a fisherman, my lord, who lives in the hamlet from which you came, and by good fortune having an errand this way, was enabled to afford you the assistance I have."

"And good aid it was, and gallantly well lent to me; for you have as steady a hand and as true an eye with a pistol as any king's cavalier of the guards. What is thy name?—for I would befriend thee, if some day I have it in my power."

"Guilford Graham, sir cavalier," answered Guilford, who could see by the dress

and bearing of the stranger that he was a man of very different stamp from the Round-heads. As the moonlight shone full upon him, Guilford could see that he was a well-made man, of thirty-seven or eight years, with long black locks floating to his neck, his air proud, and his bearing bold and resolute. But his curiosity was awakened to know how he had lost his right hand. This curiosity was perhaps apparent in Guilford's looks, for the stranger said:—

"I suppose you would like to know who I am? You ought to know, but in these days it is not safe always for men to carry their appellations posted on their breast-plates. You say we are safe here. It may be that you are; but as for me, I am not safe on any foot of England's soil on the Sussex coast. Look you! Hast thou seen any sail in the offing towards the sundown?"

"Methinks, my lord"—

"Nay, how dost thou know me?"

"I do not, my lord. I did give thee but the chance title of respect."

"Drop it, lest it be not over-safe. Call me captain, and thou wilt have a handle to my name. What didst thou see?"

"Far in the south and west I thought I saw the upper sails of a brigantine, standing coastwise; but I was too much taken up with my own affairs just then to give it or its course especial heed."

"You shall know enough of me, young man, to know that I am expecting a vessel in this night from the channel to take me off. Pull out a bit from the shore, if thine own business be not too pressing, and let me look about. I shall feel more secure with an acre or two of broad sea-water lying between me and the main. Any moment these troopers may circumvent us by the castle road, and pounce upon us."

"That is true. I will row out with you a mile or two, and if you see nothing of the craft you look for, captain, I will land you on such part of the coast as you may name, if it be not so far off that I cannot return hither by midnight."

"An affair of love thou hast on thy hands, I'll be sworn for you," answered the captain, laughing; "but I will not keep thee long. If I see nothing of the boat I look for in an hour, I will put back with you, and trust to you to find me a hiding-place for another day."

Guilford was so captivated by a certain frank, chivalrous manner of the stranger,

and he seemed to place such unsuspecting confidence in him, that he resolved, even if it should defer his interview with Lady Catharine to another night, to give this night to securing the safety of his new friend. That he was some flying cavalier he was well convinced in his own mind; and he ran over in his memory the names of several of the most distinguished whom he had heard as having been banished, or against whom sentence had been declared, with the probability that this stranger might be one of them.

"I will go with you, sir," he answered, "cheerfully; and if you do not see your vessel, and your head is in danger on land, I think I can manage to run across to the French coast in a fishing-smack to-morrow night."

"Parbleu, mon ami!" exclaimed the captain, with a laugh. "The land of Monsieur will burn my feet as badly as the land of John Bull. No, no; I am safe only on the deck of my own ship."

"Then you have a ship, sir?"

"Ay, have I, and a better keel cuts not the waters of the channel. It is she that I am waiting for. Now we are clear from the shore again I can breathe more freely. Pull out steadily a mile or so, and then we will look about us."

CHAPTER VIII.

A STARTLING ADVENTURE.

GUILFORD rowed out from the beach straight into the channel. As they got far enough from the shore to look round on the other side of the rock, they saw the troopers retiring, bearing off the dead bodies of their comrades who had fallen in the pursuit.

"Did you ever kill a man before?" asked the captain, of Guilford, who had drawn his attention to the scene on shore.

"No, sir."

"You could hardly do so in a better cause. If you had not shot that fellow, he would have cloven me to the earth. I was never harder beset in my life, and yet I have not always passed my days in a lady's boudoir."

"One would not think so, sir, to see you. I dare say you lost your hand in some famous battle?"

The brow of the stranger, naturally black, became suddenly dark as night. He was silent for a few moments, and then answered,

in tones that thrilled the very heart's blood of the young fisherman:—

"No, sir,—on the scaffold!"

"On the scaffold!" repeated Guilford, with a start and a look that betrayed his surprise; and in his excitement he ceased rowing, and regarded the stranger with a new and strange interest.

"Do not cease to row, my young friend. I would gain a good sea-berth. Your eyes are sharp. Look, and tell me what you see in the south. I fancied I caught a flash of fire in that quarter, just west of the moon's path."

"So did I, sir. There are three lights burning, one above another. They are small, but I see them distinctly."

"And so do I," answered the captain, springing to his feet, and speaking with animated joy. "That is my boat. It was to row in from the ship, which was to remain in mid-channel, and every ten minutes, as she pulled towards the little port of Blithelmstone, was to display three lanterns upon an oar. By being out here half a league from land I shall save them the trouble of going further in, and you the time—which I know you are generously giving me—from the trysing tree. I know it is unfair to rob a lover of one moment of such heavenly moonlight as this."

"Nay, sir cavalier," answered Guilford, who each moment felt drawn out to like the man whose life he had saved, and to confide in him; "it needs but little light for a lover to take his last adieu of his lady-love."

"What! Is it so? It must be, from thy tones, and the tremor of thy lip. What, a quarrel?"

"No, my lord. Do not ask me more."

"Nay, but thy happiness shall be in my keeping. Thou shalt tell me thy tale on board my ship. It may be I can serve thee where thou little thinkest."

"Thanks, captain; but no one can aid me. It is settled without charge."

"I will judge of that when I have made thee tell me thy love-story. See! there shine the lights again nearer. The rogues are pulling in towards the land, little guessing their master is so near them. If they had been a-land two hours earlier, I should not have been exposed to be hunted like a fox as I was. Pull a little across the course of the boat, so that we can meet her."

Guilford could now plainly see, not a quarter of a mile off, a black four-oared barge

pulling steadily in towards the land. No lights were now visible on board, but every few minutes three round, swinging lanterns had been displayed for a moment and then removed. As the boats drew near each other, the barge was stopped suddenly, and there was distinctly heard the clicking of steel against flint.

"My merry men are regular devils to be on the alert," said the captain. "They would hammer their flints if they saw a pair of gulls sailing near on a rotten spar. They will challenge us, and if we are not quick to give a satisfactory response, they will give us, without strive or shrift, a couple of pounds of harquebus balls in our ribs."

Scarcely had the stranger spoken, than there came sternly across the water the sonorous hail:—

"What boat is there?"

"The prince!" responded the cavalier.

At this the crew of the other boat gave a hearty British huzza; and, the oars falling into the water, the barge came bounding across the intervening space of water like an arrow. The next moment the two boats were side by side and stationary. Guilford had been struck with amazement when he heard the stranger's answer; and believing that it was indeed the prince in person, though he had believed him to be a more youthful-looking man, he sprang forward to kiss his hand and declare his devotion to him even in his exile.

"Nay, my brave friend," said the stranger raising him up, "I am not the prince; but I wish I were, for thy sake and his own, for I fear me he has not the good fortune to be so well out of England as I am. The answer I gave is but the name of my ship, and the sign of my presence to my men. I am glad to meet you again, my trusty hearts!" he now said, turning to the crew; and at the same time he exchanged friendly salutations with a young officer who commanded the barge, and who seemed exceedingly happy to see him.

"And where is the ship, Edward?" he asked of him.

"To the south-west about four miles."

"Are all well on board?"

"All, my lord."

"And any news? You have been late."

"We would have been in earlier, but a yacht was hovering about us till night, and kept us from advancing; and at length it became so close a watcher that the count fired

a gun and brought her to and captured her. He feared they would run in and report the ship."

"He did right. Whose yacht was it?"

The answer was spoken in so low a tone that Guilford did not hear it, for the young officer seemed to speak with constraint before him.

"Ah, do not fear my friend here, Edward. I owe my life to his courage. You must know, I was seated in the village inn, quietly waiting for the night, after having by a miracle got away from London, when all at once the tap-room was filled by as truculent a set of Cromwell's worthies as you ever chanced to meet with. Well, I had to put a bold face on the matter, and pretended to take no notice of them. I soon found they were despatched to guard the coast, to prevent Prince Charles from getting out of England; for Oliver has sent guards from Land's End to Newcastle, to keep him within the island; but heaven grant him a safe escape from his toils and a triumph over all his enemies!"

"Amen!" said Guilford, in so hearty a tone that the youthful seaman who had been called Edward grasped him by the hand and said, enthusiastically:—

"Whoever you are, you are my friend, since you pity the prince."

Guilford returned the pressure with delight, and the captain resumed:—

"My wits were now set to work to find some way of getting out of the inn without attracting the particular notice of these suspicious Roundheads. But the first movement which I made to rise to settle my bill and leave was observed by two of them, who came near and said, impertinently and in their sanctimonious whine:—

"'Brother, thou needest not depart. Thou shalt abide and sup with us and we will drink to the health of the Joshua of the Lord.'"

"By this I knew they meant Oliver their master, and I swore internally that I would have my tongue cut out before I would lift a cup to my lips in his honor. So I resolved, before I drew the notice of more of them upon me, that I would bolt at once, and trust to my good fortune; for if they were by chance to discover who I was, I knew my fate was sealed. So, without more ado, I seized a settle, and, swinging it broadly, knocked my two friends to the floor, and clearing my way, I gained the outside of the hostel, and then ran for it. It was some seconds before they fully understood the

matter who were outside; but no sooner did the idea take them that I was not running for a wager, but for my head, than they were not backward in making sail after me. Instinctively, I made for the sea-side, where I hoped to see my boat, for it was the hour I looked for her appearance to take me off to my ship. But no boat was to be seen, and I followed the beach at life-speed, followed by my pursuers, who gave race after me like a pack of hounds. I shot two of them as they came after me; but a third, who was mounted, would have cut me down but for this brave fellow, who knocked him out of his saddle with a pistolet shot, and then got me off in his boat, which was close at hand. So you see I had a narrow escape; and if you and my merry men love me, Edward, you will think much of this bold youth, Guilford Graham."

"We are friends from this hour," answered the elegant young sailor, whom Guilford thought handsome enough to be a woman, and laying his hand affectionately upon his shoulder.

"We will now pull to the ship," said the captain; "but, my brave fisherman, wilt thou not go on board with me? I wish to show thee my brave craft, and my true men all, every soul of whom will be thy friend for what thou hast done to-night. Come, do not hesitate. I will have thee and thy boat put adrift by sunrise, if thou likest, near enough to the coast for thee to row in in half an hour."

"I will go on board if coming nearer the shore of England at dawn will not put thee in peril on my account."

"Not a bit, my good friend; I care not, when I am aboard, how near I run in and snap my finger at Cromwell's clumsy war-ships. Give way, my men; we will take the boat, to which I in part owe my safety, in tow."

Almost in opposition to his own real wishes, Guilford found himself consenting to visit the ship. The captain had fascinated him, and he felt that he should be content to unite his fortunes with his, after he should have taken farewell of Lady Catharine. Indeed, from the first, when the stranger hinted mechanically that he had a ship, a wish was born in Guilford's heart to sail with him, and win a name upon the seas. It was mainly under the impulse of this scarcely-formed idea that he yielded to the invitation of the captain to go on board.

"I will, at least, see for myself," he said within himself, musingly; "and if I find that here is a career open before me for honor and fame, I will embrace it, if this brave captain will take me into his service."

In half an hour after he had consented to be taken on board the ship, she was seen looming up about a mile distant, darkly and indistinct, like a huge floating castle with gray towers. A single blue light was placed over the quarter, as a guide to the boat, in order that it might not mistake another vessel for it.

"She is a very large vessel, sir," remarked Guilford, as she grew larger and larger on the vision of his eye as they approached the place where she majestically rose and fell upon the long swells of the quiet and glassy sea.

"Yes; we have not less than three hundred men on board, and some thirty cannons at her sides, besides two swivels in each top."

"It must be a very fine thing to command so brave a ship as that, sir captain?"

"That is as a person's ambition may measure. Some particular friends of mine, young man, would hardly be content with less than a channel fleet."

"I am sure I should consider my fortune made for life, sir, to command a single ship half the size of this. How grandly she towers upward, like Castle Vane seen from the beach!"

"Castle Vane?—that is Lord Charles Vane's residence, and is near where we embarked?"

"The very castle, sir, that is on the cliff."

"So I supposed. Is Lord Vane at home, canst say?"

"The young lord, sir captain?"

"Ay—is he? A young man that I do not much fancy."

"Nor I, my lord," answered Guilford, speaking, without reflection, from the feeling of the moment.

"Ha! Has he crossed thy path, then, young man?"

"I like him not well, my lord."

"Common report hath it that he hath a fair sister. Hast thou, living so near, by chance seen her? If so, canst thou bear witness to her comeliness?"

"She is very fair, my lord captain."

"Thou hast seen her, then?"

"Yes, my lord," answered Guilford, blushing, and both pleased and annoyed at having Lady Catharine the subject of con-

versation. To him she was something consecrated to his most secret thoughts, and the idea of whom he could share with no one.

"She will be one of the proudest peeresses in the realm if the young king comes to the throne. Many a knight and noble, and I wot princes too, will be suing for her hand. But here we are, discovered and hailed."

Guilford's heart was swelling. Hope was dying in him at these last words of the captain. He felt that he was mad longer to think of her. He now saw more vividly than ever his rashness and folly. He, the poor fisher, to cope with knights, nobles, and princes! He felt like dropping into the deep, deep sea, and putting an end forever, thought he, to his wild hope, his ambitious madness, his despair, and all the future of misery which he saw before him on earth.

CHAPTER IX.

A THRILLING SCENE.

JUDGING from the captain's reception on board his ship, Guilford entertained the highest notions of his authority and popularity. The scene which the long war-like decks presented to his eyes, lighted up by rows of battle lanterns, was novel and stirring to the blood. Three hundred men were arranged in orderly ranks to welcome their returned chief, and the red glare of the lanterns falling upon their features, lent to their countenances and picturesque costumes a romantic character that did not fail to impress the lively imagination of young Guilford. There were at least a dozen officers also assembled on the quarter-deck, some of them with gray beards, others young and ardent. They were each and all handsomely attired in gold-laced coats and rich chapeaux with plumes. The whole appearance of the ship, with its tiers of cannon, its crowds of fighting men, armed with long pistolets and cutlasses, and its chivalrous-looking group of officers, who all seemed gentlemen born, struck Guilford in the most favorable manner.

While he was casting his eyes about him, and filling them with the new scenes thus suddenly opened before him, the captain, who was plainly dressed, and in travel-worn costume, placed his hand on his shoulder and said to his officers:—

"Messieurs, to this young fisherman I owe my life. I was hotly pursued to the coast by

a score of Cromwell's hounds, and this young man shot down the leading trooper and got me safely off in his boat. This is enough for me to say to place him on the proper footing with you all."

At this, several of the officers advanced and shook Guilford by the hand, and especially the young men were enthusiastic in their congratulations. Guilford's feelings may be guessed at, but hardly described. His heart bounded with joy, for he felt that through this fair reception might be opened a way for his advancement.

The captain now descended, or rather walked aft into his state-cabin, which was an elaborately-carved house, built over the stern of the after twenty feet of the deck; for, like the ships of that period, the stern rose very loftily, so that a person standing on the top of the poop had his head very nearly on a level with the mizzen top.

At the invitation of the captain, Guilford followed him into the first apartment—for there was a room within a room. Before the door of the farthest state-room stood a sentry.

"What, how is this?" he asked of his first lieutenant, seeing the soldier.

"My lord, here are the written reports of all that has transpired since we landed you three weeks ago, at Hastings, to go to London," said that officer, handing him a book. "You will find in it that last night we brought to a yacht, and have detained the parties, one of whom is a lady, and at the present time occupies the inner state-room."

"Yes, yes, Edward said something to me about it," answered the captain; "but as I am now on board, there can be no harm in letting them depart. Where is the yacht?"

"It is alongside, my lord."

"How many persons did it contain?"

"Seven—a gentleman and young lady, one passenger, and a crew of four men."

"Bring the gentleman before me."

"My lord, shall I leave?" asked Guilford, who saw that this was to be a private interview.

"No; remain where you are, my friend. I want to talk with you by and by."

The next moment the lieutenant returned, conducting the Lord Rudolph Vane into the state-cabin. His face was pale, and his eye had a tremulous light of fear in it. Guilford instantly recognized him, but not caring to be recognized in return, he withdrew into the shadow of one of the gilded columns that

supported the deck overhead. But the eyes of Lord Rudolph were fixed only on the dark, noble, commanding face and form of the captain.

"I am sorry, sir, that my officer, in my absence, was under the necessity of detaining you. You are at liberty to depart at any moment. May I know whom I have the honor of entertaining as my guest?"

"Lord Rudolph Vane, of Castle Vane," answered the young man, haughtily; for, finding that no danger was to be apprehended, his native insolence and audacity returned.

"Ah, my lord, indeed! I have heard of you," said the captain, with a darkening brow; "and what I have heard gives your honor not over much credit."

"Do you insult me, sir?" demanded Rudolph, fiercely.

"Be calm, my lord. Your ire here will do you no good. You are in my hands, and if you knew who I am, you would expect the next moment to hear me give the order to have you hanged at my fore-yard-arm."

Lord Rudolph shuddered. His face became as pale as marble.

"Who—who are you? What have you against me? You dare not harm me."

"No man dares me, Lord Vane. Last night, without knowing who you were, my officer in charge, seeing you hover about the ship like a spy, as no doubt you were, captured you. My first order, before hearing your name, was for your release, for anything you can now report on land can do us no harm; for ere twelve hours, we shall be sailing many leagues from here. But since I learn who you are, I will show you that I am too far above you to crush such a reptile. Deeply as you have wronged me, base as you are, recreant as you have proved to your oath as a noble, you are too far beneath my contempt to come within the notice of my vengeance."

"Who are you?" demanded Rudolph, with his eyes red with rage and alarm.

"I am the Earl of Villiers," answered the captain, in a voice of thunder.

Instantly Lord Rudolph sank upon his knees, like a man who has been smitten down by some irresistible stroke.

"Well may you tremble, caitiff! Ay, I am that nobleman—that friend of the king, who, by your treachery, was brought to the scaffold, and lost my right hand! Look ye!" And the captain held up before the eyes of

the terror-stricken young lord the stump of his wrist. "Under mask of courting my daughter, Lady Jane, you wormed yourself into a loyal noble's house, crept like a serpent into the sacred circle of my domestic hearth, crouched like a toad in the corner of my library and council-rooms till you learned that I was leader of a conspiracy to bring Cromwell's head to the block. Then, charged with the news, thou didst mock my daughter's love and leave her, and pour into the protector's ear all thy treacherous intelligence. For this thou wert rewarded with my fair estate as the hire for thy villainy, and I and mine exchanged our sweet home for a prison. But thanks to thy sister, who, when she heard all that thou hadst done, and for love of my daughter, with whom she studied her books at common tutelage, my hand and not my head satisfied the usurper, and I, with my child, was exiled beyond the sea. Well mayest thou crouch and moan. There is no man on the round earth into whose hands you should not so much fear to fall as into mine."

The wretch remained upon his knees, looking the very picture of fear and abjectness. The dread of the death which he felt he richly merited was stamped upon his clammy brow. His lips moved, as if trying to form words to ask for mercy, yet no sound came from them, as if he felt that all petitions would be in vain.

"What hast thou to answer for thyself, thou false and traitorous noble? Shall I not hang thee?"

"For my sister's sake!" he gasped, as if he had caught a faint ray of hope.

"Thy sister! Ah, yes; for her sake I would do much, for I owe to her tears and eloquence with the stern, flinty Cromwell, my head. What of her?"

"She is here! Let her speak for me."

"By the rood, she may speak for thy life and gain it; but thou shalt lose thy right hand this night, as surely as there is justice on earth."

"Mercy, mercy, my lord!"

"Ho there! Lieutenant St. Clair! Call the men together to execution."

"Oh, you are not going to kill me!"

"If thy sister pleads not for thy life, it is not worth a marvaredi to thee; but thy right hand shall be cut off. I have sworn it."

With a shriek, the craven noble fell down in a swoon his full length upon the floor.

"A voice from the inner cabin was now

heard in earnest implorations. Guilford, who had already divined that Lady Catharine was the female who had been captured with the yacht, now recognized the tones, and he darted impulsively towards the door; but the sentry presented his cutlass, and held him back. He then advanced towards the earl, and said with much excitement:—

"It is the Lady Catharine Vane, my lord—it is his sister."

"I will at once speak with her," he answered, and approached the door, which he unlocked. The maiden stood before it, with her toilet considerably disheveled, her rich hair freely floating upon her shoulders, and her beauty increased by the excitement of her feelings.

"Lady Catharine Vane, I am not your jailer, but your debtor," said the earl, courteously.

"Why are we detained prisoners? What is this I have overheard about the execution of my brother?" she asked, earnestly.

"Lord Rudolph is not to be executed if you ask his life; but he is nevertheless doomed to a punishment that no mediation can save him from. In me, lady, you behold Lord Villiers. This name is enough to show you what I owe to your generous interposition, and what I owe to your brother. Here let me thank you, both for my daughter and for myself, for the life which you were instrumental in saving from the block."

"Then spare my brother! Oh, he is already dead!" she exclaimed, on discovering him upon the cabin floor, about being raised up and revived by some attendants.

"Nay, it's only a swoon."

"Oh, spare his life, my noble lord!"

"I will do so, for your sake; and he shall understand that to you alone he owes it."

At this moment, in looking around her, her eyes fell on Guilford, who was standing near, reserved and diffident, listening to what was said. She no sooner beheld him than she seemed to forget everything else, everybody about her; for, running towards him, she caught him by both hands, and exclaimed, with the artless delight of a child which amid strangers suddenly discovers a familiar face:—

"You here, Guilford? Heaven be praised!"

The earl, who saw the act, and observed the expression of pure delight and frankness upon her beautiful face, was not a little surprised; and when he saw this pleasure

reflected from the handsome features of the young fisherman, he was not a little perplexed.

"Do not fear, Lady Kate. You are safe, and in the hands of a noble gentleman," said Guilford, encouragingly.

"I hope you are not here a prisoner—that you are not in any danger?"

"Be assured, Lady Catharine," said the earl, smiling, "that there is not at this moment a more honored person in this ship than this young man, who, I am pleased to see, is also known to you. To him I owe my life. He brought me off to my ship in his boat, and without his gallant aid I should now no longer be alive."

"Plead for me, Catharine!" suddenly called out the young noble, who had been brought to his senses. "Plead for me."

"She has done so successfully, my lord," answered the earl, coldly. "She has gained thy life for thee."

"But my hand! You will not cut off my hand?"

"Were an angel to descend from the blue skies and ask me to spare thy hand, I would not do it. It is need and ripe justice that thou shouldst not go unpunished."

"My lord, mercy for my brother."

"Lady," said the earl, taking the beautiful maiden by the hand and leading her gently into the rear state-room, "do not pain me by compelling me to deny what I cannot grant. Believe me, this is not vengeance, but duty. It is justice that Lord Rudolph should be compelled to suffer what he has been instrumental in inflicting upon me."

"Oh, my lord, leave vengeance to him to whom it belongeth."

"It is not vengeance, it is punishment. Remain here. Do not leave until I return to you," he said, kindly but firmly. "But for thy presence here, I should have hanged him to the yard-arm—not from personal hatred, but because he is so sleepless a foe to the prince. He even condescends to play the spy in the channel in his own person. The lesson he must have. I will return to you in a few moments."

CHAPTER X.

LORD RUDOLPH'S PUNISHMENT.

THE Lady Kate sat upon the ottoman where he had left her, with her hands pressed to her eyes and her face buried in the

cushions. She saw that the earl was inexorable; and although her brother had never been otherwise than hostile towards her ever since she had pleaded so successfully for the Earl of Villiers, yet she could not forget that he *was* her brother; and although he deserved nothing at her hands, yet she felt that she ought to use all her influence to free him from the disgraceful maiming to which he was about to be subjected.

"But I can do no more," she said. "His fate is sealed. I saw that by the earl's eye as he left me. Ah, poor, erring Rudolph! Thou canst blame only thyself! Horrid! that rolling drum must be the signal for the execution of the inflexible earl's command!"

When the earl returned from the state-room where he had left the tearful maiden, he found Lord Rudolph, who had recognized Guilford, and with surprise seen that he was regarded with favor, pleading with the young fisherman to intercede for him.

"You are not a prisoner. I know you can forgive me, for you are naturally generous. I have heard my sister say. Speak a word for me. I cannot endure the loss of my hand! For my sister's sake, do plead for me!"

"I have no power, my lord," answered Guilford, who could not conceal his contempt for his cowardly conduct at a time when a truly brave spirit would meet its fate with proud indifference. But there was nothing truly great about Lord Rudolph. He could be haughty and cruel in possession of power, but in suffering he showed in its true colors all the weakness and insignificance of his character.

"Will no one intercede for me?" he cried in despair, seeing Guilford turn away, for he well knew that if Lady Kate could not prevail, no word he could utter would be regarded.

"Is it all ready?" quietly demanded the earl of the officer who had superintended the preparations for the execution of the sentence.

"All ready, my lord," answered the officer.

"Conduct Lord Vane to the deck, unless he will walk of himself."

"Is there no mercy with thee?" screamed the young nobleman.

"Thou mightest as well talk to the axe that is to sever thy hand. Proceed with him, as he is disposed to linger. Nay, do not handle him roughly, for he is of noble birth."

The young lord was then led to the deck. He was borne along rather than went by his own will. The scene was terribly imposing. In the centre of the ship, just abaft the capstan, was placed a block. By it stood four men. One of them held a glittering battle-axe in his hand; another a brazen basin; the third and fourth lanterns. A little in the advance stood the surgeon of the ship, with his instruments and bandages, added to which was a seething hot iron, for stopping the flow of the blood. The crew stood around, seven and eight deep, their bearded faces lighted up by the lanterns that hung in the rigging. Farther aft were the officers, with their swords in their hands.

When Lord Rudolph gazed on this scene, so well calculated to appal his nerves, he gave utterance to an audible groan.

"Take him in hand, executioner," said the earl, "and at the stroke of the ship's bell, do your duty. This man," added the earl, looking about him, "is to undergo a just punishment. By his information I was condemned to the scaffold; but through the intercession of a noble maiden, Cromwell was content with my hand. I have decreed that this young lord shall share the punishment which his master inflicted upon me."

At this there was a general murmur of approbation, and the interest deepened. Lord Rudolph, being led up to the block, was told to take off his coat. But not obeying, it was removed by another, and his arm was then stretched out and bound firmly, in spite of his struggles and shrieks, to the block. The executioner's axe descended upon the wrist, and while a thrilling shriek from the victim rent their ears, the bleeding hand was caught in the brazen basin. The surgeon instantly proceeded to perform his duty, and staunch the blood, while the stern earl, turning away from the spot, re-entered the state-room.

"This act of justice done, I am more content to be branded as Red Hand, as men catching up Cromwell's epithet have called me, far and wide. But the protector shall feel that if one of my hands is baptized in the blood of the scaffold, the other hath power enough in its strong nerve to shake his usurped throne!"

The earl walked up and down his cabin three or four times, under much excitement, which the recent occurrence had naturally awakened in his bosom. He then looked around, as if he were seeking for some one.

"What, ho! where is young Graham?" he asked of the sentry who stood by the half-open door which led into the inner apartment.

"He passed in, my lord, urging that he must speak with the lady; and as you had left the door open, I did not consider that she was to be regarded as a prisoner."

"Very well; you are released from duty."

The man retired and the earl advanced to the door which was ajar. He opened it and was about to enter, when he arrested himself on the threshold at what he beheld. Kneeling at the feet of the weeping girl was the young fisherman, his hand clasping that of the high-born girl, and his face approaching hers, and expressive of the tenderest and most respectful sympathy.

"It is over now, Lady Kate; tears are of no avail. If it would have pleased thee, I would gladly have taken his place, though thou knowest I have little reason to love him. But all who are related to thee are near to me, for thy sake. Let us be content that his life is spared, for it was the captain's certain purpose to have hanged him, but for thee."

"I cannot blame—I cannot reproach. Rudolph must feel the justice of his fate," she said, with sudden resolution. "But how camest thou on board this terrible vessel?"

"I came to bring off the captain, who, being on shore, was set upon and nearly slain by Cromwell's troopers; and although I was on my way, dearest Lady Kate, to the castle to see thee, I turned aside for his safety, and came hither, little expecting to find thee on board as I have done."

"My brother, when he had taken me from your fishing-boat—how I chanced to be in which I explained to him—instead of going to land, hovered in the channel till night, and then began to watch this vessel, which he was expecting for four nights, waiting to intercept the captain from the land when he should come on board, as I heard him say to the young man with him, who is one of Cromwell's agents. Do you know who the captain is?" she asked pointedly and in an undertone.

"The Earl Villiers."

"Yes, but are you aware that this ship is that of the far-famed Red Hand?"

"Of Red Hand, the buccaneer?" exclaimed Guilford, starting to his feet with surprise.

"Earl Villiers and Red Hand, of whom I

have heard you name the bold exploits, are one and the same person."

"Can this be possible? Are you in the power of this terrible man?"

"You mistake him. It is the common people, the Roundheads, who call him a pirate. He is no buccaneer, Guilford, but an exiled noble, who has united with himself many brave spirits like his own, who in this ship, hover about England, seeking to do all the injury to the usurper's cause that lies in their power, and to have ever ready for the prince an armed ship to take him over the sea when he is driven to the last foothold on his rightful kingdom. There is not a truer noble breathes in England than Lord Villiers, known as Red Hand. I can forgive him his punishment of Rudolph, for my brother has cruelly caused all his woe. But of this I will talk with you another time."

"And is this Red Hand's ship? Is that captain whose life I saved on shore, the daring channel cruiser who has defied and beaten off four of the protector's ships? Is this the man that I regarded as the hero of romance, and whose exploits were the wonder of my curiosity? I am glad you have corrected my error with regard to him, Lady Kate. But is he called Red Hand, the Rover, often?"

"Yes, the Covenanters, who fear him, would frighten their children with his name as with a goblin's. But I know that he is a true and loyal Englishman, and one of the staunchest friends of the crown; and that he does more to keep alive the flame of loyalty by his active and sleepless courage than any of the exiled lords. He alone, as it were, wages war against Cromwell, who has offered vast sums for his capture. All this I have learned from my father, who has the highest regard for him, and who has shed many a bitter tear that he should have had a son who could inflict such injury upon him. Confide in him, Guilford, and he will be your friend."

"Catharine," said Guilford, in a changed and formal tone, while Lord Villiers, who at each moment was tempted to enter, but was yet restrained, saw that his face grew pale and his lips colorless. She looked up into his face—for he was standing by her—with a stare of surprise at this unusual mode of addressing her.

"What is it, Guilford?" she asked artlessly.

"I told you that last night, when I was so fortunate as to offer assistance to Lord Villiers, I was on my way to the castle. It was in order to see you and have a last interview with you. It was to take leave of you forever."

"Take leave of me forever, Guilford? Where are you going? or what have I done?" she asked with surprise.

"Nothing. Where I am going, I know not. But one thing it is proper for me to do, and that is to break off a friendship which will only continue to embarrass you, when you reflect upon your own position and my low station. Perhaps, as younger, it was allowable, as you condescended to suffer it; but, Lady Catharine, I cannot expect you, in womanhood, to abide by the friendship of girlhood. Here let me say farewell; for I may have no other opportunity. May you one day be united with one worthy of you in rank and virtue, and I will always pray for your happiness."

With these words he knelt, pressed her hand to his lips, and was retiring precipitately, when he found himself face to face with the earl.

"My young friend, do not be so hasty. I have heard and understand it all. You have acted nobly. Your own heart is breaking as a sacrifice to what you believe to be a duty. Lady Catharine, you look puzzled and distressed. May I ask you one plain question?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Are you attached to this brave young man?"

"We have long been friends, my lord."

"Have you any wish to terminate the friendship, as you term it?"

"Indeed, I was never more surprised. When?"

"It is because you do not clearly understand him. He feels, and properly, that you and he can never be united as if you had both been noble; and being fully alive to the difficulties that must interpose to bar such a union, he nobly sacrifices himself."

"He then does not understand me, my lord. I have taken into thought the differences of our rank. I trust, Guilford, you will think of this no more."

"You are too kind and generous, Lady Catharine," said Guilford, casting himself at her feet. "But I must win a name, to make myself worthy of you. If you waive all rank, I shall try and achieve, instead,

merit. It shall be my ambition to make myself worthy of you, and make the world respect him whom Lady Catharine Vane thus honors."

CHAPTER XI.

THE RETURN TO CASTLE VANE.

THE interview with which the last chapter closed having thus happily terminated the earl, after complimenting Guilford on his spirit, proposed to him, if nothing better offered, to take service with him in his ship.

"We shall not always be wanderers over the sea, my friend," he said; "the prince will one day gain his throne, and then we shall be at the top. As for Lady Catharine's heart, you may be sure it is in the right place; and I have a higher regard for you than before, since I find you possess qualities to win the attachment of so lovely a lady, who, in the brightness of your character, can discover no obscurity of birth. Now I have one favor to ask of you," added the earl, "and that is, that you will take command of the yacht and convey Lord Rudolph and his fair sister safely back to Castle Vane. He will, of course, be something of an invalid, and must be well cared for. The person who was taken with him in the yacht, is a spy of Cromwell's and I shall take care of him here. If at any time you wish to join my fortunes, you will hear of me, if you will run over in your boat to the French coast, and land on the island of Alderney, off Cape de la Hague. At that little port there is an inn, painted red. The landlord always knows my term of absence when I am away; and any line left there for me will be faithfully given into my possession when I put in there."

Guilford thanked the earl for his kindness, and answered that he thought he should very soon be compelled to take him at his word and seek service with him.

"Thou shalt be welcome; and although I can do but little for thee under my present fortunes, some day, when I rise you will rise with me."

"But, my noble earl, I fear," said Guilford, sadly, "that I shall hardly ever rise so high as to be able to offer the Lady Catharine a hand that would not be despised by her proud house."

"Courage, my brave youth. In these toppling times they who are at the bottom of

the ladder to-day, to-morrow may stand on the top round. With a face, figure, health and courage like yours, and above all, with such a prize to win, you have nothing to fear."

This conversation took place in the outer cabin. The officer of the deck now entered and reported that the yacht was alongside, and her crew on board, and all was ready for her departure.

"That is as it should be. Now, my young friend, you must convey Lord Rudolph and the maiden to Castle Vane. Go on board, and Lady Catharine shall be escorted by me into the yacht."

Guilford then took a grateful leave of the formidable Red Hand, in whose dread presence he could scarcely realize himself to have been, and descended into the yacht. The moonlight shone brightly upon its low deck, on which, stretched upon a cot, he saw the prostrate form of Lord Rudolph, looking ghastly pale in the face. He advanced towards him, and said:—

"I hope, my lord, you do not suffer a great deal of pain?"

"Pain! I endure infernal torments. Who are you? I see, now. What do you want in my yacht?"

"I am ordered by Lord Villiers to take charge of it and see you safely to Castle Vane, as he can spare none of his men."

"Where is Tennett?"

"Who, my lord?"

"The gentleman who came with me."

"I heard the earl say that as he was a spy of Cromwell's, he should put him in irons. My lord, I have no desire to undertake this duty, but it is the earl's command. I am truly sorry for your misfortune, and will see you to Castle Vane with all tenderness."

"And Lady Kate?"

The answer to this interrogation was prevented by the appearance of Red Hand, conducting the noble girl to the yacht. Guilford sprang forward to receive her and lead her to a seat in the stern; but she stopped short of it, and bent over her brother with affectionate solicitude.

"Now, my noble young friend," said Lord Villiers, "I need not tell you what a valuable freight I entrust to your charge. Farewell; and remember," he added, in an undertone, "Alderney Isle and the inn, if you have need of my poor services. And for you, Lord Rudolph, I wish you a better heart and more true nobility. I have given you a

daily remembrance of me, so I will not ask you to bear me in mind. Adieu, fair Lady Catharine; what I have witnessed and learned of the true nobility of your character to-night, has caused me to respect you as one of the rarest jewels among women. You have not," he added to her ear, "lightly bestowed your heart. Believe me, this brave youth will yet cause his name to fill a brilliant page in England's history."

"I feel it, my lord. He is all that is good, and noble, and true."

"Love and cherish him, for women do not always find men to love. I hope one of these days to hear of your happiness. Farewell; it is but two leagues to your father's castle. Commend me to him; but do not from me excuse my punishment of his son, for I have performed but a stern and painful duty."

"I know it, my lord," she answered sadly.

He pressed her hand to his lips, and left the deck of the yacht for his own lofty ship.

The next moment the little vessel was cast off from the huge side of the channel cruiser, and taking the helm, Guilford gave orders to the crew to trim the sails, and with a light but favorable breeze, he lay the course of the yacht for the main. The ship at the same time squared her enormous yards, and her head swinging round westward, she steered on that track till Guilford could see her no longer. The yacht, in the meanwhile, bounded lightly along on her landward track, and clearer and higher the cliff with its castle rose before him. The lights of the little village at its base appeared one after the other; and from one of the towers one light, brighter than the rest, shone like the lantern of a Pharos.

"That is my father's room, Guilford," said Lady Kate, seeing that he was regarding it. "Doubtless he is seated there at his books, for he has the name of being a great scholar, thou hast heard."

"Perhaps it is to guide thee back."

"Nay, he or no one is aware that I have been on the sea the last twelve hours. You recollect, Guilford, that my getting into your boat was only a whim of the moment; and after my brother so strangely took possession of me, I had no chance of return. Perhaps my father supposes that I am in my room; for I am so much accustomed to rove about for hours, that unless I am particularly wanted, it is not known whether I am in the castle or abroad."

"I hope you will not have been missed." "Catharine," said Lord Rudolph, in a querulous voice.

"What, brother Rudolph?" she answered, hastening to his side. "You have slept well?"

"I wish to exact an oath from you. I see we are near the castle. Swear to me, by your hopes of heaven, that you will never reveal to my father nor any other living being the disgrace I have to-night suffered!"

"I will not reveal it, brother, if you desire the secret to be kept."

"Desire it to be kept! It must be kept a close secret! If you do not blab it, and this fishing friend of yours can be forced to be secret, I will manage to hide from my friends the loss of my hand. I could never endure the scornful laugh, the consciousness of a mutilation so degrading."

"But it must be known, brother."

"It is known only to the crew of this infernal pirate, not one of whom will ever dare land in England. If you keep the secret, and this fellow can be made to do it!"

"Guilford Graham is a person who can be trusted, brother," she said with some earnestness.

"So you think. He has fascinated you, girl, by some vile spell. Call him to me. Nay, I will not speak to him, but will leave it to you to exact silence from him."

"I will promise it for him. But you forget the four men, your crew."

"They are minions of my will. Go and see what this Graham answers."

In a frame of mind far from welcome, Lord Rudolph lay upon his couch; for his pride struggling with a fierce sentiment of hatred and craven fear, and mingling with some little degree of remorse, kept up a fearful tempest of passion in his soul. Lady Catharine left him, on her message to Guilford, a prey to emotions of perfect torture. However, by an effort stronger than was his wont, he checked their sway, and awaited, coolly as he might, the answer of Guilford.

"He says he has no desire to report it," she answered, after going to the helm where Guilford stood, steering the vessel in towards the foot of the cliff.

"I shall take care to keep it myself," he muttered, smiling, as if he heard her words with evident satisfaction.

The yacht now drew nearer the land, and

was soon within the black shadow cast by the tall cliff. A few minutes afterwards she came to the stone pier, where the boats of the castle were usually moored. Here Guilford brought the yacht skillfully to alongside the landing steps. The men obeyed his orders in furling the canvass and making her fast; and then taking the cot upon which the young lord was lying, they proceeded to bear him ashore, and convey him up the steep path to the castle. Guilford gave his whole attention to the comfort of the invalid, taking care that the men moved steadily and cautiously, while Lady Kate went on before. At length they reached the gate of the castle, where after delivering his charge to the warder, to whom Lord Rudolph said he had been wounded in a duello, he left to return to his own home. But he had not advanced ten steps from the portcullis, ere he was detained by the voice of Lady Kate close at his side.

"Why, Guilford, you do not well to take your leave so quickly—or rather no leave at all. You have not given me time to thank you."

"I did but fear to irritate your brother more if he saw me take leave of thee," he answered, pressing to his lips the hand she placed confidently in his.

"You are too guarded, Guilford. You know not how proud I have been of you this day and night past. I cannot return without expressing my sense of your noble delicacy. I appreciate and understand it all. From this time we know each other, and you will not mistrust me."

"Mistrust thee, Lady Kate?"

"Nay, that is not the word exactly. But you will not doubt my regard for you?"

"I cannot; you are too kind, when you know, as I now do fully, how far beneath you I am."

"Love knows no rank. You are worthy of me, or I should never have loved or cared for you. How like you Red Hand?"

"And that noble gentleman and right-hearted patriot was the famous sea king I have heard so much of. How difficult it is for me to realize that in the Earl Villiers I saw that celebrated captain."

"Do you not like him?"

"It seems to me I could die for him."

"So do all men who know him, my father says—and he is not the least of his friends. But how shall I forgive him his act of tonight?"

"It was terrible retribution, Lady Kate; but was it not deserved?"

"I cannot deny it. My brother has deeply wronged him; and perhaps it is just he himself should endure something of the suffering he has inflicted upon him. It was a mercy that he spared his life. Now, my noble friend, since we must part, tell me frankly where you are to go—what course you have marked out for yourself, so that one day you may come back and ask my hand of my father; for, as thou hast said, thou must achieve something to please him and give thee honor. I will wait thy time, true to thee, even to death, so that thou comest not in life to claim me as thine."

This was spoken with all the truthfulness and sweet confidence of a woman who loves with all her heart.

"I have hardly formed a plan, dear Lady Kate. I will by to-morrow decide. But my mind is so full of the Earl of the Red Hand, that I shall probably decide by going to offer him my services."

"That would please me, Guilford. He thinks much of you. Though he is now but the head of a small company, and commands but a single ship, under good King Charles the First he was lord high admiral, and ruled navies by his nod."

"I will follow his fortunes."

"Thou wilt not be led astray? The times are ripening, my father says, for the throne to have its own again. The land is weary of the protectorate and its tyranny. Prince Charles has been defeated, it is true, and is now a fugitive, either in Scotland or England, at this moment; but if he escape over the sea, he will then be the rallying point for armies of tens of thousands."

"It was rumored yesterday," said Guilford, "that the prince had been seen in Warwick in the disguise of a pack-man, traveling south. It was also reported that one who had known him perfectly, saw the same pack-man in Berkshire two days afterwards."

"We heard of this; and doubtless the reports are true, and the prince is making his way to the south of England, hoping to find a passage across to France."

"Heaven grant that he may reach France in safety, and foil all his foes," said Guilford, with warmth. "But Cromwell is so vigilant, his emissaries are so numerous, his spies so vigilant, that every person who cannot give a satisfactory account of himself, will be placed under arrest."

The lovers had now reached the point in the path down the cliff where it became precipitous. Here they stopped, and Lady Kate, taking Guilford by the hand, looked him earnestly in the eyes and said:—

“You are going to seek your fortune and win a name. But remember, I do not ask either from you, but they are your own voluntary wish; and never forget that, if after all, you should return unfortunate, and without the success you hope for, you will be received by me with the same affection with which I now part from you.”

The lovers now took leave of each other, and Guilford hastened down the precipitous path without trusting his eyes to look back and take another look of the fair form which he knew was lingering to gaze after him.

CHAPTER XII.

SURPRISING INTELLIGENCE TO GUILFORD.

THE way by which he now left the castle was not that which descended to the beach, where the boats usually were, but a path that led northward down the hill towards the country-side, and which conducted persons who left the castle for the interior, to the main road a mile off. Upon reaching the deep glen at the foot of the eminence, Guilford struck into a broader cartway that went in the direction of the village. He walked onward, lost in his own thought, and thinking upon the chance of the future. He had emerged from the little dale, and had the village roofs in sight, when the voices of singing and bacchanalian carousing reached his ears. He stopped surprised at what he heard, and then hastened forward to ascertain the cause of such unusual sounds. He had gone but a few steps further, however, when he saw a man seated by the roadside, groaning in a most pitiable way. He approached him, and recognized Digby, the well-known village busybody and gossip.

“Up, man, up! What aileth thee, Digby?”

“What, is it thee, Master Guilford?” asked the man, starting to his feet, and hugging the young fisherman with great delight. “I am glad to see thee!”

“What hath happened? The clothes are torn half off thy back, and thou hast blood on thy cheek.”

“Marry have I? Blood shed for the prince. You must know that I did but fill a

cup in the inn yonder to the Prince Charles, when these Cromwell troopers set upon me, and would have slain me outright but for Dame Bess, the hostess, who took my part, and told them roundly I was but a poor innocent, and meant nobody no harm, and wouldn’t hurt a fly, as thou knowest, Master Guilford.”

“What have Cromwell’s troopers to do in the inn?”

“Cromwell’s troopers? What, hast thou not heard the news? This is a God-send, then, if thou hast not heard what I supposed every man, woman and child in the village had heard. Why, if there is one trooping Roundhead in the port, there are two hundred and fifty of the shaven crowned, psalm-singing rogues.”

“What are they doing here? When did they come?” asked Guilford, with surprise; for having left the village just before their arrival the evening before, he knew nothing of the object of this new invasion of the Covenanters, though that a party of them were in the town he was aware, from their chase of the captain. But he was ignorant of the particulars.

“They came galloping in about sundown, and what could not find quarters at the inn, dispersed over the hamlet, till there is not a house that has not a brace of them to kiss the lasses and eat out the larders. As for what they ha’ come for, it is to keep watch that Prince Charles don’t find shipping at our little fishing town and get safe over to France.”

“This is news, indeed, for our quiet town, Digby. I knew some had been here, but supposed they had left. Dost thou know whether there are any of these Roundhead rogues at our cabin?”

“Marry, come up, I verily believe that the two most truculent fiends among ’em, the two Goliaths of Gath, are making themselves at home there.”

“Then I ought to be there at once,” said the young man, hurrying forward.

“But, be discreet. I would advise thee entreat them civilly.”

“I shall be discreet, you may rest assured. I shall take care not to propose Prince Charles’s health to a brace of Covenanters,” he added, laughing.

“Nay, take me with thee. Let me keep under the protection of thy valiancy, good Master Guilford. When I got my head broke, I went to thy house first, but the

good dame told me thou hadst taken the way to the castle last; and although after midnight I came this way to wait for thy coming, and I will not leave thy back while a Round-head varlet hath footing in the town. There is nothing like courage to defend a man against dangers; and if a man have it not himself, he must seek it elsewhere; and marry, I know thou hast enough for thee and me. Hark! hear the arrant hypocrites sing their long-winded Old Testament verses. There was one chap of them who had a beard like a lion, who did nothing but sing over a chapter of proper names, as 'Moses begat Boaz;' and by the way he rolled his eyes up, one would have fancied he got great grace from the employment."

Digby went on talking after this fashion, until they came to a lane turning towards the water from the main street, on which the hamlet was built. At the foot of this lane stood his own cottage. At the corner of it he was challenged by a trooper mounted on a black horse.

"Who goes there?"

"A fisherman."

"Advance, and let me see if thou smellst fishy," answered the man, in a coarse manner.

Guilford approached him, and taking off his bonnet, boldly showed him his face.

"Where dost thou live?"

"There!" he answered, pointing at his house.

"And what art thou doing abroad so late, for it is well to two o'clock in the morning?"

"I have been a-trysting."

"So I guess; but, young man, beware of the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life, and the allurements of Sathanas. And who is that with thee?"

"A poor wretch whom I take to fish with me at times."

"Let me look at thee closer, thou poor wretch, for a king's eye might hide itself under the shadow of a beggar's cowl."

With this the trooper extended the point of his long sword, and catching the cap of Digby upon its end, raised it into the air. He then made him approach close to his stirrup, and looked keenly into his round, pugnosed, bloated visage.

"By the beard of Herod, thou art the prince of ale-pots and must have too much dread of water to think of crossing it. Thou wilt never cross over to France and drink sour wine while thou canst grow lusty on good ale

in England. What is thy name, Sir Rubicund?"

"Digby—David Digby, your highness," answered the gossip, with humility.

"Thou shouldst be called Balaam," replied the trooper, who, at this moment seeing another person running down the street, left Digby and spurred towards him.

"By my head, this fellow would as lief eat me unsodden, as he would a hare, Master Guilford. Didst mark his teeth?"

Guilford, however, had taken the opportunity to walk on towards the gate of his house, and he was about opening it, when he perceived two persons seated within it upon a little wooden settle, which, of an evening, was a common family resort.

"It is Guilford!" exclaimed one of the persons, springing up at seeing him.

"What, Anne? Up so late? It is very near morning."

"I know it, cousin, but—but—one could not sleep with two soldiers within; and besides, they have my bed; and moreover, Aunt Betsy bade me wait without and watch for your return."

"Guilford, you do not know me here in the shadow?"

"What, Robin? Is it you?"

"I have been keeping thy cousin Anne company, waiting for thee. I would not leave her and your mother alone during your absence, with two troopers in the house."

"You are very kind, Robin. I know not how to thank you. But," he added, smiling, "I suppose you have not been without your sweet reward, from what I saw when I interrupted you."

Robin colored, and Anne held down her head.

"Not the least sign of jealousy does he show," she said to herself, with disappointment. "He does not care for me, nor love me as Robin does. I will never let him know I have loved him, since he is so cool and indifferent about it."

"Where are these men, Robin?" asked Guilford.

"One is asleep, with his head laid on the table; the other is stretched on the bed in boots and sword, and snoring away like a swine."

"So much the better. Where is my mother?"

"She is in the back room," said Anne; "but I have"—

"Have what?" asked Guilford, seeing

her hesitate, and draw back, after seeming about to make some important communication to him.

"I forget. Nothing."

"You remain here with Anne, Robin, until I return," said Guilford. "I wish to speak a few words with my mother. I have then something I wish to say to you."

"I will stay with Anne with pleasure," answered Robin. "Now, sweet Anne, what did I tell thee? Did I not say he loved thee only as a cousin? Thou seest he cared not a stiver for my being with thee so many hours of moonlight, whereas, if he had loved thee, he would have shown his jealousy; for beshrew me! suppose I, loving thee as I do, should ha' come home late at night and found thee up with a young fellow in a bower, his arm about thy waist, and thy hand in his; should I not have taken fire, and had a quarrel with thee on the spot? To be sure. Love would act no otherwise. He thanks me for keeping thee company as quietly as if thou wert his sister, and now marches into the house, bidding me keep thee company a little longer. Does this look as if he loved thee other than as a cousin, thinkest thou?"

"I am satisfied now, Robin?" answered Anne, with tears in her eyes. "I see that he cares nothing for me."

"Then why wilt thou not care for me? I love thee with all my heart! I will try and make thee happy. You will never find a truer heart than that I offer thee."

"I will be thine, Robin. I know you love me. I will think no more of my Cousin Guilford."

At hearing this, the happy Robin caught the fair girl to his heart, and imprinted upon her lips the seal of betrothal. The kiss was strangely echoed, as if a person had thrust his finger into his cheek and drawn it out quickly, causing a popping sound. Both looked up and beheld Digby.

"That's what I like to see," he said. "Nothing like loving one another. Well, I'll let the whole village know of it to-morrow; and when you are married you must invite Digby. You can't have a wedding without Digby. Nothing goes on right without Digby. Where is Master Guilford gone, Miss Anne?"

"In the house," answered the maiden, blushing and laughing. "Oh, you eaves-dropper! Come hither, Digby. If you will say nothing about this, I will give you a sil-

ver sixpence next Saturday night to drink the prince's health."

"Well, I won't, blame me if I do," answered Digby, as he stretched upon one of the settles, to sleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN INTERESTING COMMUNICATION.

GUILFORD found the door of the cottage ajar, and pushing it softly he entered the small, plainly furnished front room. A lamp filled with fish-oil burned upon the table, with a huge "thief" upon the wick. By its light he saw the two troopers. Upon a small truckle-bed in the corner lay one of them, sleeping off the potations of negus with which he and his comrade had been abundantly plied by the good dame, who desired to get them in a state of quiescence as soon as possible—a result in which she had admirably succeeded. Sleeping heavily, and with a loud, sonorous breathing, the other trooper sat by the table, his head among the cups, and resting on his thickly-gloved hand. His black beard lay out upon the board like a mop, while the light shone upon the round, closely-shaven head, giving it the appearance of a porcupine rolled up into a ball. By the side of his head lay his pistolet, the grasp of his hand holding it loosely, in his sleep. The two men reminded Guilford of two wild beasts he had once seen crushed and reposing in a cage.

Having surveyed the scene, he stepped across the threshold and passed lightly into the room. He stood for an instant looking at the sallow face of Strait-gate, who lay on the bed, and wondering that so wicked a countenance could have a soul quiet enough to sleep. As for Broad-way, he saw in him one of those half devils, half highwaymen, so common in Cromwell's army, who, with a few scraps of the Old Testament on their lips, passed for pious covenanters, and under the cloak of religion did all sorts of enormities.

"Let them sleep; I have no wish to disturb them," said Guilford, passing on and opening the inner door of his mother's room. "I have already placed one of their number in the sleep that knows no waking." And with this recollection of what he had done the evening before, came over his mind for the first time the thought that he might possibly be recognized by some of the party who had been nighest when he shot the

soldiers, though it was moonlight and not broad day, and no one came within twenty yards of him, save the horseman who was drowned in trying to swim his horse round the promontory.

Upon hearing the door open, his mother looked up from her needle, and seeing him, uttered an exclamation of joy, and going towards him to meet him, made at the same time a gesture of silence and warning.

"I am so glad you have returned, my dear son," she said, as she led him to a seat. "You have been gone full eight hours."

"It has been an eventful eight hours to me, my dear mother."

"I have been trembling lest you should have come into collision with Lord Rudolph, at the castle. Did you see the Lady Kate, my boy?"

"Yes, mother, and all is as I would desire. I will tell you by and by, when we are alone. Those men in the other room must have annoyed you not a little."

"They did at first, but they soon drank themselves into insensibility. But where is Anne, that she did not come in with you?"

"She is at the gate with Robin."

"Yes. He loves her, and I wish she could return his attachment. She had best come in, now you are at home; but I sent her out, as the soldiers got to be something rude of speech towards her."

"They had best keep their tongues under civility," answered Guilford, "or I will show them that there are men in England besides Cromwell's myrmidons."

"Hist, Guilford! They will hear you. As it is, they do not suspect us of being opposed to the government. But listen to me; I have something of moment to communicate to thee; and for this I have been so anxious to have thee come back."

"But first hear what will please you, my mother. My interview with Lady Kate resulted in her refusal to permit me to cease to think of her, and it is decided that I am to seek my fortune in the world, and some bright day come back to ask her hand."

"Ah, my boy, fortune is fickle. But the Lady Catharine shows a truly noble nature."

"I have no doubt that I shall be able to win some name that will make me less obscure, and more worthy to ask her hand of her noble father. Would she wed me tomorrow, I am too proud to become her husband as I am—a poor young fisherman. I will win rank and name, and lay them at her

feet. Because she loves me in my humble state, shall I willingly consent that she shall wed one so lowly? Shall I thus reward her generous love?"

"Thou art noble in mind, my boy," said his mother, "and deservest her."

"Mother, thou hast heard of Red Hand?"

"Oh, Red Hand, the noted sea warrior, whose very name strikes such terror along the coast! What of him, Guilford?"

"Dost thou know his history?"

"Nay, I do recollect that it is said he was one of King Charles's nobles, and that, when he was to have been executed, he placed his hand beneath the axe instead of his head, and with the other wrenched the weapon from the headsman's grasp, and with it cut his way to the water-side and escaped in a ship."

"This is partly true."

"I know Cromwell has offered a reward for his head, and therefore"—

"You fancy he must be a pirate."

"I know not what he is. Men say he is greatly to be feared. He has burned half a score of castles and towns on the coast."

"These were those places in which Cromwell's minions dwelt—places which, by falsehood and wrong, they had robbed loyal nobles. I have seen this sea-king, and spoken with him, mother."

"Spoken with Red Hand?"

"Yes; I have been on board his vessel, which to-night was not two leagues from the land, opposite the village. He is a proper gentleman. He is the Earl of Villiers, a true-hearted nobleman, and friend of both the late king and Prince Charles."

"Speak lower, for there are strange ears near us."

"The two brutes are asleep, and I pray they may not wake till morning. Yes, mother, Earl Villiers is a true Englishman. He commands a ship because he cannot command a fleet. His wars are made only against the usurper. His ship is the only remnant of the true British navy, and he the only British admiral, as Charles, the wanderer prince, is the only British king. But these things will not always be so. In a few days I shall, if nothing more favorable turns up, offer myself to this admiral of the Red Hand, and win fame under his flag."

"If this terrible captain be a true earl, who only seeks the rights of his king, I do not say aught against this, Guilford, save that I shall be grieved to have thee leave my

roof and my side. But mothers cannot always hope to have their boys with them; and I hope to see you yet distinguish yourself."

"You will not be alone, mother. Anne will remain, and if she marries Robin"—

"Marries Robin! I wish she would, indeed."

"There is little doubt of it from what I saw to-night. They are lovers, or lovers never were."

"That is good news at least. I knew she need never look to you."

"Look to me, mother! Who?"

"Anne. Bless me, how odd you have never seen it in her eyes. She has loved you better than cousin ought to love, Guilford."

"I was not aware of it. But now you speak of it, I do recollect some things that make me think you are right. But Robin will make her far happier. They will marry and live with you, and you will hardly miss me. I will have my boat repaired to-morrow, and give it to you. Has there been any excitement in the village to-night, early in the evening? Have you heard anything about any of the troopers having been shot?"

"Surely I did. Fuss enough was made about it. The troopers here heard firing, and went out, and after a long time came back, and swore dreadful oaths, and said some smugglers had shot three of their party, who were pursuing a loyalist. They made great talk of it in their cups, and swore dreadfully how they would on the morrow have vengeance."

"Smugglers, they said, did they, mother?"

"I believe so; but do not raise your voice so loud, for I dare say we've been overheard in half we've said by the poor gentleman, if by chance he's awake."

Here the good dame cast her eyes up at the trap in the ceiling.

"What poor gentleman? What do you mean, mother?"

"Hush! The troopers'll hear you, and then it's all up with him, be he peasant or prince, gentle or simple. There is a man hid up in the hemp-loft," she added, whispering close in his ear, and then clapping her fingers across his mouth. "Not a word. I fancy he is a loyalist. Don't speak, and I'll tell you all about it, for I want your advice to know what to do with him."

"If he is a loyalist, I will aid him to the

best of my ability, mother. But when and how did he come here?"

"That I will tell you. You see, after you went out, and had been gone a little while, the two soldiers came in and invited themselves to take up their quarters for the night. After eating their supper and drinking, they got up and went out; as they said, to make a search of the premises, to see what out-houses, boats, hiding-places and such things, for concealing and escaping in we had."

"The prying devils!"

"Hist! They had not gone out, scarcely, before I saw a face looking in upon me at that window. Before I could make out who it might be, the window was raised, and in stepped a stranger. He came so lightly to the floor, looked so beseechingly and suffering like, and had altogether such an appearance of weariness and flight, that I at once felt my charity warm towards him kindly; and knowing how many good men there are who are wanderers in their own, or what is worse, foreign lands, I bethought me this man might be one of them. The idea that he was a robber or a criminal never once entered my mind. He ask me in a voice that was courteous and respectful, if I would conceal him before the soldiers came back."

"Then he knew they were quartered here?" said Guilford, who had listened with the deepest interest to her words.

"Yes, for he had plainly been watching their departure; and, as they went out one way, he came in another way, as I told you. I instantly closed this door, dropped the curtains, that no one might see into the room, and pointing to the ladder, told him to conceal himself at once in the loft. He obeyed at once, and having given him food and drink, I removed the ladder."

"Have you spoken with him since?"

"Not a word. He is as quiet as the grave. I think he must be asleep, for he looked ready to drop. You should have seen what a white hand he had."

"How old a man is he?"

"About thirty; but he looked pale and haggard, and might not have been so much."

"How was he dressed?"

"In a sort of grayish black, plain and coarse, and much worn and road soiled. His hair was jet black, and so were his eyes; and his manners were those of a gentleman; that I saw at once."

"I would like to know who he is, mother," said Guilford, who had listened to all she

had said with the liveliest attention. "He is without doubt one of the prince's friends, who are now hunted like wild beasts throughout the kingdom."

"What if it should be the prince himself?" whispered the good dame, with a wistful look.

"It can hardly be; yet it is clear he is expected to seek the coast, and should he do so, he is likely to come pretty much as this stranger has presented himself to you.

Whoever he is, he needs our protection, and his life may depend on our care and discretion."

"What can be done?"

"That must be reflected upon, dear mother. It will not be safe for him to remain where he is. If a search of the house should take place, the loft will not escape their eyes. I must, however, first see him and know what he would have."

[To be continued.]

**RED HAND:
OR, THE CRUISERS OF THE ENGLISH CHANNEL.**

A STORY OF THE OLDEN TIME.

BY F. CLINTON BARRINGTON.

CHAPTER I.

CASTLE VANE. A YOUNG FISHERMAN.

ON the shore of the Sussex, there is no object that fills with a deeper interest the eye of the tourist, both on account of its picturesque aspect and its historical associations, than Castle Vane. At the present time it is a stately ruin, but majestic in decay. Time, while rending its massive towers, has also bound them together with a strong net-work of vines of ivy and creeping plants, so that they stand like venerable age supported by the entwining arm of charity and filial love.

The prospect from the eminence on which stands this noble ruin is varied and wide-extended. Northwardly, the green vales and pleasant uplands of "Merry England" retire away till softly lost in the dissolving distance. To the east and west are seen turreted towns and ports with anchored shipping and defending fortress. To the south is outspread the shining blue waters of the channel, broad and mirror-like, and bounded in the far southern horizon by the faint azure-gray line of the coast of Normandy. The glimmering sheen of the sun-lit channel is spotted with innumerable specks, some white as snowflakes, others black, as they

present their illumined or shadowy side to the eye. There are vessels of all sizes and characters, steering every one on a different course, some on errands of commerce, others bearing messages of war. Here and there among them goes a dark, mastless craft, trailing a long cloud of opaque smoke after her along the air, and passing ship after ship with a speed that mocks them.

Such is the present aspect of the scenery visible from the cliff on which stands Castle Vane, on any bright morning in summer. But at the period of our tale, its features were somewhat different. No steamers then ploughed the channel, and fewer vessels were seen dotting its expanse; while Castle Vane, instead of being a ruin, lifted its walls and towers and bristling battlements as high and proudly as any lordly castle in the land of England.

Almost overhung by the castle was the small fishing port of Brighthelmstone, a hamlet of threescore huts, where dwelt a rude but honest class of men, who subsisted by fishing in the channel. From the terrace of the castle one could toss a penny into the chimney-tops of two or three of the nearest cottages, though the dwellings were generally some distance apart, following the windings of a street around the curving shore of the cove. There was an air of neatness and thrift about most of the habitations, each having a small garden-patch and a yard in front wherein to dry their nets and fish. If there were any superiority in the appearance of either of these cabins over the other, it was to be claimed by one which stood near the foot of the cliff, and close to the path which wound from the beach to its summit. This superiority consisted in its being whitewashed, and in having vines growing over the narrow doorway in imitation of an arch, beneath which were two wooden benches, from which persons seated upon them had a pleasant view of the channel with its moving craft. That spot, also, wherein the other fishermen dried their nets, was by the proprietor of this abode made a flower-garden, while on the surrounding rocks were spread his nets and sun-dried fish.

One evening in May, in the year 1650, about half an hour before sunset, a fishing-boat came sailing into the cove from the channel, and steered directly from the rude landing in front of the cottage we have described. Its bow was shattered, and it was

evidently leaking freely, and kept from sinking only by the extraordinary exertions of a young fisherman, its sole occupant, who was bailing out water constantly as he approached the shore. At length the smack touched the beach, and with an exclamation of satisfaction the young man leaped on shore.

The danger in which the boat had been was apparent to more than one in the village, and encouraging shouts had been sent to the young man's ear, to keep up his strength and not lose his courage. Therefore, on reaching the land in safety, he found himself in the midst of some score of a group, composed of the fishers' wives, of maidens, and of such old men as had given over active service. They looked at the shattered bow of the boat with surprise, and while some congratulated him with having got safely to land, others eagerly inquired how he got so badly wrecked.

"It is of no consequence, friends," answered the young man, as he secured the boat to one of the posts of the pier; "accidents will happen at sea, you know."

This was said with a pleasant laugh; but his mother, who drew near to welcome him after the danger she conceived he had been in from drowning—for he had been seen by her a league at sea, struggling to save his boat, which he had so gallantly brought in—knew that the smile was forced and unnatural to his usually frank and open face.

"There is something in this," she said, shaking her head, and turning to two of her particular gossips; "there is something in this matter more than Guilford sees fit to tell."

The young man, having secured the craft high upon the beach, and furled the sails, shouldered a pair of oars, and with flushed brow, and a proud, defiant air, strode up towards the cottage, without regarding his friends, whom he left examining the boat and wondering how it could have been so shattered unless it had been run into.

"That is it," asserted an old fisherman, who had carefully examined the broken shearing; "she ha' been run into, an' by a heavier craft than hersel'."

The young fisherman, having deposited his oars in the becket above one of the cottage windows, on the outside of the house, instead of going in, began to pace up and down in the shell-covered walk before it. His eyes were restless and fiery; his attitude

erect and warlike, and his heavy steps seemed to fall to the sound of a trumpet. Something evidently had occurred to rouse in the bosom of the young fisherman all the pride, independence, and haughty resentment of the man; for beneath the fustian jacket may beat as much pride and sense of honor as beneath the ermine of a born noble.

The appearance of the young fisherman was superior to that of young men in his class and occupation. This superiority did not consist in dress, for his clothing was as coarse and rude as that of any of his fellows; nor in the symmetry of his person, for there were in the hamlet as well-shaped young men as he; but it was in the noble expression of his whole form and face. He looked like one born rather to command those with whom he daily associated, than to be merely their equal. This innate power in him they recognized, though it was never demanded by him, for he seemed wholly unconscious of a superiority of which all others in the hamlet were instinctively conscious. His face was handsome, and perhaps not less so for being browned by the sea winds till it was almost as dark as the Arabian. His eyes were black, and filled with intelligence and courage. As a seaman he had no equal on the Sussex coast, of his age, all men acknowledged. As a fisherman he was skilled in the craft in all its details, so that no one ever surpassed him in success. If other boats came back empty, Guilford Graham's was sure to contain some fruits of his skill and patience. In trials of strength and agility in those holiday sports which the youths of the hamlet used to indulge in, challenging to competition some inland village, he always came off victor. For filial obedience in supporting a widowed mother, for manly protection of his beautiful cousin, Annie Graham, for his fast abiding as a friend, and his reverence for holy things, Guilford was an example to all the young men on the coast. His popular manners, his constant cheerfulness and good nature, made him a general favorite; and many a pretty maiden sighed in her heart for the love of the handsome Guilford.

"What aileth thee, my son?" asked his mother. "Something hath gone across thy temper, and made thee vexed; tell me, what is the matter with thee?"

He stopped in his fierce walk, turned, and taking both her hands in his, he pressed

them in affectionate respect, and, looking her in the face, would have spoken, but some strong emotion rising, checked his utterance, and tears filled his eyes and ran down his cheeks. He released her hands, dashed the glittering drops from his face, and would have walked away, when she gently held him.

"Nay, Guilford, you must come and sit down in the porch, and tell me what has happened. Tears in my brave boy's eyes! Ah, something heavy has pressed upon thy soul this day, to force tears from thee!"

"Come and sit down, mother, and I will tell thee," he said, after a moment's internal struggle. "You are wise and discreet, and may be able to advise me. But you will not despise me when you shall know all my rash folly?"

"You must first prove to me that you have been rash or foolish, who were never known to be so," said his mother, who, though humble in station and poorly attired, seemed to be, as he had said, a wise and discreet woman, being a person of that plain common sense so much oftener found in low conditions of life than in the more artificial circles of society; and to her influence was owed, doubtless, his superiority,—for it is the woman that forms the character of the growing man, and her plastic hand leaves its impression on every moral outline.

CHAPTER II.

A NARRATIVE OF INTEREST.

THE young man had led his mother to the wooden bench beneath the green arch that spanned the humble doorway, and there, sheltered by the growing foliage, he said to her:—

"Mother, when you have heard what I have to say, give me your wisest counsel. If I were to act, led only by my own impulses, I can see plainly that I should do a greater evil than has been done to me. You remember with what buoyancy I left this morning, to go on my daily fishing cruise?"

"Yes, and spoke of it to Anne before she went to the castle. Methinks I never saw you look handsomer or appear happier."

"And well might I have looked happy, dear mother; I had just seen and spoken with Lady Catharine!"

"Yes, it always makes one cheerful to see her sunny face, boy."

"Ah, dear mother, you know not how the sunshine of her face penetrates to and warms my heart. In her presence I feel a joy—a bliss—a happiness—that I experience at no other time. The sound of her voice thrills to my inmost soul. I feel that I could worship her, and adore the very flower crushed by her footstep."

"You should not speak thus, my boy; it is a sin to worship only God."

"And the Virgin?"

"That is not so certain, my boy," she said, gravely but doubtfully; "but if we may worship the blessed Mary, we may not worship earthly maidens."

"I can see no harm in adoring one so fair and good as the Lady Catharine, dear mother," answered the young fisherman, with enthusiasm.

"You should not think of her, my son, for your words and looks make me fear."

"No evil can come of honoring and delighting in Lady Catharine, dear mother. She always speaks to me so graciously! The day, you remember, when I succeeded in saving the noblemen who were driven on the coast in a French bark, she told me she only wished that she could have had a brother who could have done this; and ever since then, although it is a year ago, she has always seemed to speak to me with a peculiar kindness."

"One of them you saved was her uncle, Sir Harry Vane, and she feels grateful. My son, do not think of the great; their words are air, and their smiles deceit and guile. If you go on thinking so much about every smile and word a noble lady gives you, you will do some foolish thing. Forget the Lady Catharine, boy; and if you must think of fair maidens, which is natural enough for a youth of four-and-twenty, let it be of those of thine own station."

"There are tales of noble maidens being loved and won by lowly youths, mother," answered Guilford, with a certain light of hope and daring speaking in his fine eyes.

"And only in tales are they won—never in reality and truth, my son."

"We will not talk of this now, mother. Hear what I have to say to thee touching what hath happened to-day."

"That is what I would most listen to."

"After I had embarked this morning for the channel grounds to fish, and when I had got out to the rocks over which we cast our lines, I lowered my sails and proceeded to

fish as usual. It was a cloudless day, and the fish swam too deep for my hooks; and so I lay back listlessly in my boat, and amused myself, as I love to do when I am rocking alone in my boat out on the bounding sea, with gazing about me. A hundred craft similar to my own were riding gently upon the undulating waves; and here and there could be seen a tall ship with triple towers of white canvas, crossing from England to France, or from France to England. But those objects soon wearied my eyes, which very shortly rested upon the cliff and lordly towers that soars above our little hamlet. Its castellated angles and battlements were figured in strong, dark lines against the blue sky, and it seemed the proper home of the noble lord who dwells there."

"You speak of our Castle Vane, my son?"

"Yes, mother. As my eye rested upon it, I could not but recall its fairest inmate, for I never behold it that I do not think less of every one it contains than of the Lady Catharine. To my imagination she seemed the only dweller there. Nay, do not frown, mother. As I was gazing on the castellated pile, I recalled, not only the lovely face and form of Lady Catharine, but the time when we first met. Do you remember it, dear mother?"

"Nay, I do not mind such little matters. It was so long ago thou shouldst scarce remind it."

"I shall never forget it. It is a delight for me to recall it, and a joy to talk of it. It was five years ago only. I was then nineteen, and it was my birthday fete; and on that occasion you had presented me with a new jacket, and Cousin Anne had 'broidered for me a gay cap."

"Ah, well do I recollect the jacket and cap, and how gallant you looked in them, my boy."

"After supper I was going to a dance at Tim Dowlin's in honor of his pretty daughter Peggy's marriage, when, as I was crossing the road that leads from the bench round by the mill, in order to reach Tim's before dark, I saw a horse coming towards me at full speed along the old Sussex road. On it was a young girl, who had lost all command of the animal, which, with the reins flying, was evidently running away with her. She did not shriek, nor speak a word, but, as she approached me, she cast on me such looks of appeal for succor, that, regardless of danger, I threw myself with both hands upon the

horse's head, and, dropping to the ground, let him drag me several yards before he could be checked. At every leap forward he made, I expected to feel his iron hoofs crushing into my chest; but the beauty and imploring looks of the lovely girl, which seemed to appeal to me as her last and only hope of life, gave me courage and strength; and at length I brought the horse's head and knees to the ground, and held him, with a power of muscle that I have never felt the possession of since, until she got from the saddle unharmed. I then released my hold of the horse, who furiously bounded away like the wind. My next thought was of the young girl I had been instrumental in saving. She sprang towards me, grasped me by both hands in the warmest manner, and with eyes filled with tears, and smiling with gratitude, she said, with emotion:—

“How can words thank you! How can anything I can express, young stranger, recompense you for the risk of life you have run for me!”

“I need no thanks, lady,” I said to her; “the consciousness of your safety is all the reward I can ask or wish for.”

“As I made her this answer, I looked, dear mother, with wonder upon the extraordinary beauty of her face. I had never imagined there was such loveliness on earth. She was about fifteen years of age, but with the charming richness of form of one two or three years older. Her eyes were a soft azure, that rivalled the bending blue of a summer sky on the sea. Her hood was thrown back, and her golden tresses dishevelled by the swiftness with which her horse had sped with her in his mad flight, and I was completely bewildered with the glory of her beauty.

“Will you tell me,” she said, in tones that have never ceased to echo muscally in my soul, “to whom I am indebted for saving me from a painful accident, or perhaps a dreadful death?”

“It is no matter, lady; my name is nothing; it is humble, and, if spoken, will be forgotten by one so noble as thou art.”

“Dost thou know me, then?” she asked, with a smile of surprise. “I have not been here before since I was a very little child.”

“I do not know thy name, lady, but I see that thou art of the high born of the land. I would, for thy sake, that he who has served thee to-day had been thy equal. Shall I remain near thee, as it is growing late, till

thy party comes up?” I asked of her, gloomily too, I fear; for I then, for the first time, my mother, felt what it was to be born of low degree. To gaze upon one so fair and good, and so made to be loved, and feel that I could never be more to her than a common hind—this—this made my cheek kindle and my very heart sink.”

“Guilford, thou art too ambitious; be content to be what thou art, or thou wilt be a miserable man. Thou canst not change thy nature. Nobles are born nobles—fishermen are born fishermen. Do thy duty in what thou art.”

“It is well to talk, mother, but that does not make one's wretchedness and consciousness of debasement the less.”

“Go on with thy story, for I never heard all this before.”

“No, nor other ear, save that of Cousin Anne; and she listened to it with but little interest to what thou dost, mother.”

“Who was this maiden? Am I right in guessing her to be the Lady Catharine, on the day she came up to the castle from London, where she had lived since she was a child?”

“Yes, mother. When I at length told her my name, she answered that hers was Kate Vane.”

“Lady Kate, you mean?”

“No,” she said, “plain Kate Vane;” and this, with the pretty way she spoke it, made me like her. I saw she was not proud, although I told her I was a fisherman; for when she asked me to show her the way to the castle, and we walked on together, she asked me a great many questions about the sea, and the fishes, and the way I caught them; and said, of all things she should like to go out some day in my boat, fishing with me. After half an hour's walk—the pleasant half hour of my life—we reached the castle gate. The day had already closed, and the moon was shining brightly. The castle was in a scene of confusion and distress; and just as we entered, several persons with torches, on foot and on horseback, were coming forth, talking so loudly that we understand from their words that the horse which Lady Kate had ridden had reached the castle, and that it was supposed she had been thrown and killed. But when she was seen and recognized, who shall describe the joy! I was quite overlooked in the first outburst of the surprise and delight of all, and instantly withdrew. As I descended

the path, I heard my name called by some one from the gate who had been sent for me, doubtless after Lady Kate had time to tell them to whom she had been indebted for her escape; but, as I had no wish to be thanked by any other than Lady Catharine, I quickened my pace, and soon reached the road on the beach. Instead of going home, I continued my original route to Tim's; and as I passed the spot where I had stopped the horse, I paused to recall the scene, her face and voice. As I did so, my eyes were attracted by something which sparkled in the moonlight. I picked it up from the ground, and with pleasure discovered that it was a broken ring. It had evidently been broken by her strong grasp upon the bridle, and dropped in two pieces from her finger when she alighted. It was a diamond set in a circle of pearls. I pressed it to my lips and"—

"Daring boy!" said the mother, half pleased at his gallantry, yet half disapproving, knowing as she did the dangerous tendency of such emotions when once awakened in the bosom of a lowly-born youth towards a high-born maiden. She sighed while she smiled; but the smile passed, leaving a troubled air upon her calm and sensible face. "You returned the ring, of course, Guilford?"

"When next I saw her; but she bade me keep it, or rather offered me one in its place, as she saw I valued it as a memento; but when I told her I would prefer the broken one, found on the spot where I had first the happiness of seeing her, she told me I might keep it if I would wish to."

"And when and where did you meet her, my son?"

"Only the next week after. I was coming in from the channel, and steered my boat closer under the castle than usual, for I thought I saw the form of a young girl on the white beach. I was not deceived. It was the Lady Kate, gathering shells. Upon recognizing me sailing past, she beckoned to me to land. I did so, for I wished to return the ring. She at once began playfully to chide me for leaving the castle so abruptly, without waiting to be thanked by her father and brother and her friends for what I had done. I told her I did not wish to be thanked at all; but if anyone were to thank me, one word from her was a world of thanks. She then told me that she had been riding with her brother, who was an Oxford-student

then at home on a visit, ahead of her party, when a shot fired by him from his saddle at a heron had caused her horse to take fright and run off with her. 'My brother,' she said, 'followed me, but as I turned to the left, while he took to the right, he missed me; and but for you I should have been killed, for I could not have kept my saddle three minutes longer, as I was fast losing all presence of mind. You must come up to the castle and let my father know you,' she added. But I told her that I was too lowly to be noticed by nobles, and too proud to be compelled to feel their superiority. At this, she looked at me with a stare of beautiful surprise, and, shaking her head, she said, archly:—

"I fear you will be too proud to speak to me by-and-by."

"Oh, no! you don't understand me, lady."

"Yes I do, and, what is more, I respect you for your feeling," she added. "I can conceive how one like you must feel when you are compelled to endure the superiority of others, who may, in reality, be your inferiors. But you will not find my father such a nobleman. He knows how to appreciate merit; and as for my brother, I heard him say that he should find you out to thank you."

"I then offered to her the ring, which, as I said, she permitted me to retain. Seeing that she liked the beautiful shells which were scattered on the beach, of which she had a basketful, but of indifferent value, I offered to bring her others, from the king's rock beach, where they are to be found of such rare colors. I then sailed to the beach and landed, to take her basket, for our conversation had taken place while I was standing in my boat, about ten yards from the land, when a young man, clad as a hunter, followed by a couple of dogs, came round a jutting angle of the cliff. He was of the middle height, well made, with long flaxen hair flowing on his shoulders, a brown moustache, and a fair, red-and-white complexion. He was exceedingly handsome; but an air of angry surprise which he put on, upon discovering us, increased the disagreeable impression his naturally haughty bearing made upon me."

"I saw at a glance that he was a noble, and the exclamation of Lady Kate, 'My brother!' told me who he was without further introduction."

CHAPTER III.

A HAUGHTY INTERRUPTION.

"THE young nobleman," resumed Guilford, continuing his narrative to his mother, in the green embowered porch of the cottage, "stood for an instant regarding first one and then the other of us without a word. He then strode up and said haughtily:—

"Who and what are you, that are so familiar as to hold converse with this lady, and with thy cap on, fellow?' With these words he struck off my cap to my feet, and one of his dogs, taking it up, carried it off, tearing it with his teeth.

"Wilmot, how can you be so rash?' exclaimed Lady Catharine, with a mingled expression of pain for me and anger against him. 'This is the young man, Guilford Graham.'

"And who, pray, is Guilford Graham?' he repeated, sarcastically.

"Have you forgotten the name of the brave youth, who, at the risk of his own life, saved mine?"

"How should one remember every hind's name? So, young man, you are the clown that risked your life and broke the jaw of the best horse in my father's stud? for the horse came to the castle with his jaw broken as with a sledge-hammer, and we had to shoot him. You have a hand like Samson. But you did the thing well, though it cost a horse worth a thousand guineas."

"Brother, how can you speak of such a trifle, when my life was at stake?"

"True, but a discreet person should save the one and not destroy the other. There, fellow, are four guineas. I dare swear that thou hast not seen so much gold together before, and that it would take a year's fishing to give to thee in hand the same amount."

"As he spoke, he threw the gold at my feet. I did not notice it. I had felt insulted by his manner as well as by his words and by this act. I did not deign to glance towards him, but I looked in the face of Lady Catharine. Her eyes were alight with just resentment. She felt that I had been insulted, peasant as I was.

"Wilmot, why do you reward courage in such a strange fashion? One would fancy you had found in this young man a foe, rather than one to whom you owe a debt of gratitude."

"Gratitude to one like him!" answered the young Lord Vane, with a contemptuous glance at my coarse apparel. 'I have paid him for his service in gold. What fault can he find? By the rood! it would seem, from the familiar manner in which I found him holding converse with you, Kate, that he presumed more than becometh a hind. Fellow, get into thy boat and begone, and think not, because chance hath made thee the mean instrument of saving a high-born lady's life, that thou hast gage therefrom for speaking to her.'

"He did but offer to collect shells for me," said the Lady Catharine, reproachfully. 'I called to him. He is no ways to blame.'

"Then it is you who are to blame, to descend to speak to a youth like this, who will boast in the ale-houses among his fellows that he has held tryst with the Lady Kate Vane."

"At these words the eyes of the maiden flashed fire, but instantly filling with tears, she said:—

"You are ungenerous, Rudolph."

"In the meanwhile," said Guilford, addressing his mother, "I stood amazed and burning with indignation; and I really believe that if he had not been the brother of the fair Lady Catharine, I should have struck him to the earth for his insulting words to her. But finding that my presence only made him more bitter towards her, and fearing a collision, which might render it necessary for me to strike him in self-defence, I got into my boat, but taking the basket with me, resolved to redeem my promise to bring it to her on some more auspicious day, filled with the shells she so greatly admired. I therefore made sail and left them on the beach at the foot of the castle; but soon I saw them together making their way up the path to the gateway at the round tower."

"And then you made an enemy of him forever."

"It may be so. He soon afterwards left for Oxford, where he has remained the most of the time until three days ago, when he returned."

"Did you receive and take away the gold?"

"No; I saw him stoop and gather it up after I had sailed away. The obligation to me, therefore, on his part, remained in full force as at first."

"And hast thou seen the Lady Catharine

since then, my son?" asked his mother, earnestly.

"Often and often, dearest mother; for it was not many days afterwards that I left for her upon the beach, while, from the terrace of the castle she looked down and saw me, the basket of shells, which I soon beheld her descend and take up. I have met her in the forest; I have seen her at the castle on gala days; I have encountered her on the snowy beach by moonlight."

"You meet the Lady Catharine by moonlight? You say what oversteps the truth, I fear."

"Nay, mother, we have often met, and walked and discoursed together upon the glorious works of nature, the majesty of the sea, the mystery of the stars, the delights of friendship, the bliss of heaven, and upon everything good and beautiful. Ah, mother, it has been to me as if for the three years past I had been permitted to have companionship with an angel of intelligence and love. Oh, how she has elevated my soul, expanded my mind, enlarged my views, purified the gross in me, and cultivated the virtues which knew not how to grow right. If I am superior to what I then was, if I am called by the villagers wiser and better than others, it is to her sweet teachings in those stolen hours which we have consecrated together to friendship."

"Guilford, you fill me with amazement. I tremble at what I hear you utter. Can all this be so? Yes, it must be. You could not deceive me; and besides, I have now in my mind numerous little circumstances which the revelation on your part gives me a full explanation of. How wonderful it all is! You, my son of a humble fisherman, the chosen friend and confidant of a noble and high-born maiden, the daughter of a lord! It is difficult to believe it. But it is said woman's heart, when it chooses, looks not to title, nor rank, nor dress, but for a kindred heart; and perhaps that, though one is born in the castle and the other at the foot of the castle, the same spirit may be animating your bosoms. But the Lady Kate is young; she has seen but little of the world. She is hardly conscious of the impassable gulf that lies between you and her own high station. The romance, sweet and pleasant as it has been to you, must be broken. Her hand will be asked by some proud noble, and she will give it to him, and then she will

be ashamed that she has been so foolish as to descend to your level. Trust me, my dear boy, this wild dream must be broken. Let me advise you to see her no more. Better for your own feelings that you withdraw now from an intimacy that cannot be perpetual, which is so extraordinary, than wait to be cast off with infamy. She is now nineteen, and what pleased her at fifteen may disgust her now."

"You do not know her, my dear mother," answered the young man, his face lighting up with generous warmth in defence of Lady Kate. "She feels no differently towards me now than at all other times. She will never give her hand to any noble of them all."

"This is a bold speech. Wouldst thou bind her to thyself, Guilford? If, in the innocence and frankness of her nature, she has given her regards to the humble youth to whom she feels she owes her life, are you so ungenerous as to take advantage of her gratitude, which, it would seem, is ready to give herself with it, in order that you may have the selfish pleasure of feeling that you are loved by a high-born maiden?"

"Mother, you do me injustice. You do not understand either me or the Lady Catharine. I have bound her by no pledge. I have dared to exact no promises from her. I have not thought of any happiness or consummation of our pure friendship, beyond the sweet bliss of the present hour—the joy of her sweet presence."

"You are then both rash and imprudent. You are wasting a generous heart upon one who can never be more to you than she now is, and she is wasting upon you affections which can never find their fruition; for the natural tendency of such attachments as it appears exist between you and Lady Catharine, is a union by marriage, and to this result the opposite ranks you occupy in society must forever put a bar. You, therefore, are doing her irreparable injury, and endangering the wreck of her whole life's happiness, by encouraging by your continued presence in her society, a passion which can only end in sorrow, tears and wretchedness to you both."

"I see, I see, dear mother. Your words have opened my eyes. I behold my position as you behold it, and am conscious that it is a false one. Mother, I will see her no more—no more—no more!"

CHAPTER IV.

A MOTHER'S COUNSEL.

THE young fisherman ventured the last word in a tone of sadness, and with his head bowed down upon his mother's hand, upon which hot tears dropped, one after another, like rain.

"Thou hast spoken well; thou hast spoken like a man. Heaven give thee strength to abide by thy words," she said, impressively.

"No more!" he repeated, in a tone of unutterable anguish. "I see that I shall destroy her hopes, her happiness, her future, if I suffer this mad dream of bliss to go on. But it will rend my heart."

"Nay, be strong in a sense of rectitude and manly consciousness of acting right. Thou wilt not hesitate to sacrifice thyself for her, if thou lovest her."

"Love her!"

"Then reflect that it is for her whom you love you make this sacrifice of never beholding her more. As it is, she can never marry in her own rank, as becomes her; for thou hast her heart, for which, nevertheless, thou canst give her no return."

"No return? True, true. I can give her only my heart again. I have no rank, no castles, no place at court, no historic name, no wealth, no power, to return to her. Mother, you are wiser than I, far wiser. The dream is past; I will see her but once more."

"Nay, not that once."

"Can I steal from her away, dear mother? Shall I cease my interviews with her without a word of explanation. Shall I add to our separation the barb of suspicion that I have done aught that makes me ashamed to see her, or that she has given me aught of offence? Nay, it is becoming that we meet once more—to part forever."

"Perhaps you are right, my son. I will trust to your good sense that this interview be so conducted as to release you both from any indiscreet pledges of fidelity into which you may both have unadvisedly fallen. When will you have this interview?"

"This very night."

"The sooner the better for you both. Now, my boy, explain to me what you began to do when you sat down here—how your boat came so dreadfully wrecked."

"I deserved it, I see, since we have had this talk together. I will explain in a few

words. You know, perhaps, that young Lord Rudolph has returned to the castle within a few days?"

"I heard so from your Cousin Anne."

"Anne?—yes; she knows everything that goes on at Castle Vane."

"Anne speaks of the Lady Catharine in the warmest praise."

"How can any one do otherwise? All love her who approach her; and alas, all may approach hereafter but me. I alone am to be exiled from her sweet presence. But hear what I have to say touching the injury done to my boat. While I was listlessly rocking on the swell, waiting for the fish to take the hook, and gazing upon the towers of the castle, and thinking of Lady Catharine, I fell asleep and dreamed. I dreamed that I had won her hand, and that I led her up to the high altar in Westminster Abbey, where a mitred archbishop united us in holy marriage. I recollect that the king was present, and all his nobles, and"—

"The king!" exclaimed his mother, with surprise; "you know we have no king—the judges have put him to death."

"I know it, mother; but in my dream I saw the king, or a king, and he seemed to smile on me, and give me honor with the proudest of his nobles; and I thought I was clad in the robes of an earl, and wore an earl's coronet."

"These dreams are nothing, my son."

"But this made a deep impression upon me when I awoke; but I must confess my heart sank within me when my opening eyes fell only upon my coarse fishing clothes and poor fishing boat, with a few lines, and hooks, and tubs, that constituted all my earthly wealth."

"A fit gift to bestow upon a noble bride, Guilford," said his mother, in a slightly ironical tone, quite unusual to her. "Take a lesson from your dream, and let your common sense see that you are never likely to exchange your poor estate as a fisherman for the regal splendor you beheld in Westminster Hall."

"You are right, mother. I will try and impress the lesson upon my heart. It was past noon when I awoke, and I found that the flood tide had swung my vessel close in under the land, and that Castle Vane was towering high in the air above my head. As the day was still cloudless and unfit for fishing, I landed and roamed along the beach, and endeavored to detect traces of

the small footstep which had the evening before wandered there by my side. I also gathered every pretty shell that met my eye for the grotto which Lady Catharine was making in the garden of the castle. In this pleasurable occupation the afternoon wore away, and at length I returned to my boat. But imagine my joy when I beheld the Lady Catharine seated in it, engaged in sketching the castle and rock.

"'I saw your boat, and took the liberty, Guilford,' she said, smiling, in that captivating way which almost made me lose my senses. 'I at first stood on the large stone half surrounded by the water there, but the tide coming in, I was afraid I should be caught by it, and so I exchanged it for the boat. I see you have some beautiful shells.'

"'Yes, Lady Kate,' I answered, with that trembling of the voice without which I never could speak to her. 'I have some here we have never seen. But you do not get a good view of the castle so nearly under it. Let me push out further from the shore, so that you can embrace the whole at one view.'

"She thanked me, and getting into the boat, I pushed from the beach, and hoisting the sail, ran out a hundred fathoms, and there brought my little vessel to, and sat down and watched her as with taste and skill she transferred the outlines of her father's castle to a leaf of the portfolio before her. While she drew we conversed, I know not about what; but the time flew by unmarked. She had finished her sketch, and was admiring its faithfulness, when a flaw of wind suddenly struck us from the gap in the cliff, and blew so hard that I was compelled to run before it for ten or twelve minutes. But after getting an offing of half a league, it decreased so much in strength that I was able to lay up to it, and prepared to return to the foot of the castle rock. But Lady Kate, seeing the danger was passed, and delighted at finding herself so far out in the channel, entreated me not to return immediately, but sail further out and let her try and catch a fish or two with me. To this I consented, and reaching the fishing ground, I was soon engaged in teaching her how to catch the fish, which now began to take the hook freely. While we were thus engaged, my whole thoughts full of the happy consciousness of her presence, we were suddenly startled by a loud shout. Looking up, I beheld a green, gilded yacht,

of about twenty tons burthen, standing towards us at a rapid rate hauled close on her wind. At her helm I recognized the haughty figure of Lord Rudolph, whose face was livid with fierce passion. There were half a dozen other persons on board, four of whom were the crew. He steered straight for me, and I saw that his intention was to sink me. He called me by all manner of opprobrious epithets as he came near, and I saw that he was bent on equally destroying both Lady Catharine and myself. My sails were brailed up, and I had no time to get out of the way; but seeing he was aiming to strike me amidships, I succeeded with an oar in turning the bow of my boat so as to receive the shock there. The moment of collision, two or three of the crew, by his previous order, sprang on board, and taking the Lady Catharine up, regained the yacht with her. The shock drove the bows of my boat in, and she began to fill. The yacht, recoiling from the contact, glided past across the bows, and as Lord Vane saw me making efforts to keep my boat from going down, he laughed like a fiend, and then deliberately aiming a shot gun at me, discharged it. I should have been killed by the ball if I had not thrown myself upon my face.

"The next moment the yacht was far to leeward, and I was left alone with my sinking boat. What a moment of shame, disappointment and bitterness was that to me! What an hour of happiness had been suddenly interrupted! I now turned my whole attention to saving my boat and my life. But my ears were rended by the cries of Lady Kate to her brother, not to let me perish. But I could hear his scornful laugh only in reply.

"By great exertions, my dear mother, I reached the cove as you saw; but if I had been half a mile further out, I should certainly have been lost. Now, mother, you know all. I have unfolded to you the secret of my life. You are my only confidant. Perhaps I have done wrong in encouraging this sweet friendship on the part of Lady Kate. But should I dash the cup of bliss to the ground? I was not wise enough to know that it was charged with sorrow to us both. I can now look on all with your eyes. I see that I have been in the wrong, and that I have been inflicting a positive injury upon her whom I would die to serve. I see it—I see it all. I cannot so much blame Lord Vane for wishing to break off a friend-

ship that was laden with so much future evil."

"I am so glad to see you take this view of it, Guilford. It shows me that you are still as good and generous and just as I have always believed you to be. No doubt that Lady Catharine loves you. But do you think—now hear me put the question with calmness—do you think she would listen to you with anything less than with surprise and scorn, if you proposed seriously for her hand?"

Guilford shook his head, but made no reply.

"I fear that such a proposal from you would open her eyes, which seem to be so strangely blinded, and lead her to see the true position in which you stood to each other. It would break the spell effectually. Doubtless she, as well as yourself, has never asked of her heart and judgment where all this would end."

"I will see her once more, and then we part forever, unless"—Here a certain proud light shone in his fine eyes, and he rose to his feet.

"Unless what, Guilford?" asked his mother, with anxiety, fearing all his resolutions were to be turned into thin air.

"Unless I can render myself *worthy* of her, mother."

"Worthy of her! Indeed, so far as truth and honor and manly comeliness are concerned, you are worthy of the love of any maiden, methinks, Guilford; but these count nought in the sum of qualifications which he who would wed a lord's daughter must bring to his aid."

"I *may* yet make myself worthy of her, mother. In the books of history which she has loaned me, and which we have read together, are accounts of lowly-born youths having risen to thrones, and to wed kings' daughters. Nothing is impossible to love and ambition!"

"That was in the days of Romaunt, long ago, my boy. Such things do not happen now."

"No one knows. What is enacting now? Who is President of England, and who sits in the seat of the long line of descended kings? Is it not Oliver Cromwell, who rose from the ranks of the people? Even Lord Rudolph Vane must lift his cap to this man of humble origin."

"True, my son, the people have the power."

"Yes, and the nobles hold their castles and their coronets at the will of the Lord Protector. Because I am a fisherman now, shall I of necessity always be one? Thanks to the teachings of the Lady Catharine, I have knowledge and learning, and know how to hold such place as my good fortune may perchance elevate me to. From this day I doff the fisher's jacket, and go and offer my services to the admiral of the fleet, now in the Thames and preparing to sail against the Dutch. There all grades are open to talent and aspiration; and with the star of Lady Kate's love shining ever above the horizon of my future, I shall yet win some place worthy of her."

"Ah, my son, you do not reflect that a successful officer under Cromwell's power would be an unsuccessful wooer for the hand of a daughter of so proud and royal a noble as Lord Vane. Dost thou forget how these nobles hate the Protector?"

"True, true, I should only defeat my aim," he answered, gloomily, as the sunshine of hope faded away into the shadows of his darkening destiny. "And what is more true, I am in heart a king's subject. I have been taught by you and my father to honor the king, and to look upon Cromwell as a usurper. Nothing but the hope—now dashed to the ground—of winning Lady Kate through honors gained under the Protector's flag, would have suggested to me the idea of offering myself to him. My heart is with the exiled and hunted young King Charles; but to share his fallen fortunes I should be no nearer my ambitious hopes. Mother, advise me, I know not what to do. I can never forget Lady Catharine. I must love her while life endures; and while I live, it must be with the faint, far-off hope that kind fate will one day smile upon my love, and with the sunshine of joy dissipate all the clouds that now hang around me."

"My advice is, my boy, to remain where you are, and try and forget the Lady Catharine, as much so as if she were dead and buried."

"Be it so; I will try," answered Guilford, in tones scarcely audible to his mother's ears. He then suffered her to embrace him, to breathe a word or two of consolation into his heavy heart, and then entered the house.

It was already twilight, for the sun had gone down behind the blue Hampshire hills while they sat in the green porch, holding the conversation we have above recorded. In a

few minutes he came forth and was passing out of the gate.

"Leave no room, Guilford, for a second interview," whispered his mother, impressively.

"It shall be the last," he answered, with deep emotion modulating the sounds of his voice.

At the gate he met a fair young girl of eighteen, clad in a neat chintz gown, and coarse but becoming straw hat.

"Good evening, Cousin Anne," he said, as he passed her.

"Good evening, Guilford," she responded.

"Aunt, what makes Guilford so sad?" she asked, looking after him.

"He has a heavy sorrow at heart, child," answered the mother, in a tone of sympathy. "Heaven hold him strong under it."

CHAPTER V.

COUSIN ANNE GREY.—A SURPRISE.

THE maiden who betrayed this interest in the young man was Anne Grey, his cousin, and the adopted child of her aunt, his mother. She was a beautiful girl of eighteen, with dark brows and eyes, and handsome cheeks and lips, and a neat figure, buoyant with the elasticity of health. She had daily employment at the castle by Lady Vane, who gave occupation to several maidens of humble degree in the art of embroidery, a pursuit then much in vogue with the high-born dames of England.

Every morning for two years past, Anne had gone to the castle to pass the day in the large hall or working-room, where the lady of the castle, seated in the midst of her half-score of maidens, either taught them difficult figures in pattern by her own example, or passed from one to the other giving directions.

"Have you completed that battle-piece of Hastings's field yet?" asked dame Graham of Anne, as the latter seated herself by the frugal supper prepared for her and Guilford, but which the latter had left untouched.

"Not yet, aunt; we expect to complete it by June. We have been already twenty-one months upon it. We had to wait three weeks for the arrival of the young lord before we could finish his figure."

"What, does my young lord figure in the tapestry?"

"Yes, as one of the king's youthful knights. He has taken a good many sit-

tings, and the portrait is to the life; but Lady Vane draws and works in the features herself, while we only work the surtout and the armor."

"What think you of my young lord?"

"Something bold and free, methinks."

"So I fancied, if he be like other nobles of his degree. I hope, child, he hath not noticed thee."

"I like not his looks at all, aunt. He hath twice spoken to me in a manner that has made my cheeks burn. I would gladly find some excuse not to go up to the castle until he shall be gone back to London."

"Tell not thy cousin Guilford of this."

"Nay, he would care little. He careth not for me," she answered, changing color.

"Ah, and is it this way blows the wind, my child?"

"Which way, aunt?"

"I see thou lovest Guilford more than thou shouldst as a relative."

"I did not say so, aunt. Yet who can help liking him? Does not every one like him? Nay, I have heard the fair Lady Catharine speak of him to me with passing commendation. But Guilford never thinks of me or any other maiden."

"And how like you Lady Catharine?"

"She is fair and good as an angel. We all love her. She is nothing like Lord Rudolph, her brother; and methinks he is something hoarse towards her betimes, as becometh not a brother."

"So I hear."

"And what aileth Guilford to-night?"

"He is ill at ease. I warrant me he'll be better and wiser to-morrow. But here comes in some neighbor. See who it is."

Anne rose up, and advancing to the door started back with a cry of surprise as she beheld two of Cromwell's soldiers, armed with harquebus and broad-sword, and wearing the well-known badge of the parliamentary army. Instantly dame Graham, with that instinctive sense of propriety and self-possession which never forsook her, though she trembled in her inmost soul at beholding the shadows of the two men crossing her threshold, advanced and said civilly:—

"Enter, friends, and refresh yourselves. We were just at supper; if you will take seats, you shall cheerfully have whatever our poor larder can furnish."

The soldiers sat down without ceremony, as if they felt perfectly at home and were accustomed to the civility which they met with.

One of them was a tall, thin, cadaverous man, with dark, angular brows, sallow cheeks, and straight, black hair for a beard, while that upon his head was cropped short like that of a modern convict. He was armed in a formidable manner, and was altogether a formidable-looking person—a sort of cross between a Puritan saint and a robber of the Rhine. His comrade was shorter by a head, girded full twenty inches more by the waist, had a bald, bullet head, and no beard. His eyes were small and twinkling and the corners of his mouth which naturally were inclined to turn laughingly upwards, were drawn down in a sanctimonious curve, that each moment required his attention to keep so. The names of these two worthies were respectively "Strait-gate" and "Broadway." The first five minutes Strait-gate occupied in saying a long grace, to which Broadway responded an unctuous amen. They then fell to work upon the fish and ashes-cakes before them; and having taken off the edge of their appetite, they began to use their eyes now in scanning the room, then the face and dress of dame Graham, and lastly, but more lingeringly, the pretty countenance of Anne Grey, who sat aloof in the window, trying to withdraw as much from close observation as she could.

"So, dame, thou seemest to subsist by the travail of fishing? Verily, it is a good trade, and thou shouldst thrive. This comely maiden is thy daughter I do peradventure!"

This was spoken by Strait-gate.

"My niece, your worship."

"Come hither, maid, and let me see if thou art well-favored," said Broadway. "They do say that much eating of fish doth improve the complexion."

But Anne, as soon as she saw that she was particularly noticed, quickly tripped out of the cottage.

"*Verily and yea, the maiden hath fled.* Truly, she hath no need to fear the soldiers of the Lord and of Gideon. We war against kings, and not against women."

"And how fares my Lord Cromwell, gentlemen?"

"Marry come up! how should he but do well who is next to King David in power, and Solomon in wisdom? Nevertheless, thou showest thy reverence for him, good dame, by asking. Where is thy husband?"

"Dead, these seven years, sir."

"Hast thou no man about?" asked Broad-

way, cocking his half-shut eye at the oars and sails that stood in the corner.

"I have a son, a young man of four-and-twenty."

"Where is he, dame?"

"He has gone forth on some affair of his own."

"Very well; when he comes back we shall doubtless see him—for, by your leave, we will quarter with you a few days."

"Such poor comforts as my humble roof affords are at your service," answered the dame, thankful that there were but two of them when there might have been more.

After the men had well eaten, and quaffed strong waters from well-filled flasks which they carried at their belts, they walked forth, saying they would ere long be back to stay for the night. They had not been five minutes departed, when a man entered with the familiar air of a village gossip. He was dressed in a patched and torn doublet, hose down at the leg, a coarse tunic, and slouched hat. Moreover, his fiery-red nose showed that he was much given to ale-house potations.

"Ah, dame, how be it all wi' ye? How is Master Guilford? Strange news come to town. Stirring times these—stirring, piping-hot times! Thank the Lord I was born in these stirring times!"

With this, the new-comer rubbed his palms together, and spoke with great volubility, like a man over-earnest to be the first to turn the faucet of a barrel of news.

"Why, what hath happened, Master Digby?" asked the dame.

"Then you've not heard it? Good!—you'll soon know, for they'll be upon you. Why, a whole company o' parliamentary soldiers marched down into the port just at sunset, and have stacked their arms at the Whale and Gudgeon. There they are, drinking and singing psalms, and looking as warlike as Gog and Magog. Oh, it's terrible to see their long broadswords and open-mouth harquebuses, at the end of every one of which hangs a true man's life!"

"We've had two of them here already," said the dame.

"What! you don't say they have been here?"

"There is where they have eaten but ten minutes ago. They say they are going to quarter here."

"Dear, bless us, what stirring times! But did they tell you what they came here

for? I warrant me I have a piece of news for you yet."

"We did not ask them, and I did not care to be too inquisitive."

"Just like you. Well, I know. Listen, Miss Anne. The king's son, Prince Charles, has made a break from some place where they had him penned in, away off in Scot's country, a-north; and the Protector's got certain news he's trying to fly across the seas. So, you understand, he has sent vessels to every port where he could, to keep watch and to examine every boat that puts off; and here, on the south of England, he has sent troops to guard the coast, and especially every place where there are fishing boats. So at this moment there is not a chance for the prince to get out of England without being seen and taken. All along the coast Cromwell's soldiers are quartered, and are to keep strict watch. All this I learned from one of the troop who used to be an old crony of mine when the old king was alive."

"Poor Prince Charles!" sighed the fisherman's widow; "he is, I fear, destined to fall into the hands of his enemies."

"We must speak low when we mention his name, dame," answered Digby. "But good-night! I must go, for I've got to tell the news to a good many. Stirring times—stirring times! Good-night, fair Miss Anne!"

With these words, the village news-bearer hastened from the cottage.

"I do really hope they will have their labor for their pains," said Anne. "Poor Prince Charles has been haunted till he has no place left to hide his head."

"It is to be hoped he may escape."

"Aunt, there is some one looking in upon us at the back window!" suddenly exclaimed Anne.

The dame turned her head, and as she did so the window was raised, and a man stepped into the room. His appearance struck them with surprise and curiosity. He wore a plain peasant's dress, soiled and travel-worn, an old fur cap, that covered his eyes and nearly concealed his features, which were pale and well-shaped. There was an air of superiority about him that led the dame to suspect that he was some one of the nobles in disguise, who were lurking about England in considerable numbers with prices set upon their heads. He seemed ready to sink with fatigue, as, supporting himself on the edge of the table, he said, faintly:—

"You are a woman—you are compassionate—give me a few hours' shelter. I am pursued, and throw myself on your mercy!"

"Come, follow me," quietly said the dame, speaking with decision and promptness. "Anne, place that food in his hands."

A plate of provisions from the table was handed to him by the maiden, and he followed dame Graham out of the room like one accustomed to ask and find shelter in this manner. There was a ladder in the adjoining apartment which led to a loft.

"Ascend this and you will find a bed and security. Make no noise. As soon as my son comes we will seek a more secure place of shelter. There are two of the parliamentary soldiers quartered in the house, but they shall not suspect your presence. Who you are I ask not; I only wish that it were the prince, save that I should be grieved to see any prince so hardly driven by his foes."

He pressed her hand gratefully, and ascended the ladder, which, at her direction, he drew up after him. He then closed the opening, so that no sign of the trap was apparent from below. She then returned to Anne, whom she impressed with the importance of keeping the secret of the presence of the fugitive from every one.

"Have you any idea who it is, aunt?"

"I have my guess. It is either the prince himself or one of his friends."

"Oh, that it were the prince, and we could get him safe across the channel!" exclaimed the beautiful girl, with warmth.

"This is sooner said than executed. I sincerely pray that it may not be the Prince Charles, for I do not see how we could protect him. These soldiers will doubtless pry into every nook and corner of the house. But Guilford will soon be in, and then I will consult with him."

CHAPTER VI.

A CONCEALED GUEST.

THE good dame then went to work to prepare some drink of ale and French brandy, which latter article the fishermen on the south coast, from their nearness to France, had always cheaply and in ample quantities in their household. Having made the potato hot, and seasoned it well with spices, she sent Anne with it to give it to their concealed guest, while she herself remained to watch the entrance to the cottage, that

no one might come in unobserved. Anne, on entering the back apartment of the hut, carefully locked and bolted the door between, and then drawing a rough table beneath the trap, she got upon it and knocked lightly with the end of a broom upon the ceiling above her head.

"Sir cavalier," she said, softly.

"What, maiden?" asked the voice of the concealed fugitive, speaking through a crevice in the floor.

"Open, and take this warm negus which my aunt hath prepared for thee. We know you must suffer from thirst and fatigue, for we have heard of the great hardships the friends of Prince Charles have gone through to keep from being observed."

The trap was carefully lifted, and the arm of the wanderer was thrust down for the flagon which the maiden reached up to him. As he took it he tapped her hand with his fingers, in token of his gratitude, and said, in a voice which had become habitually subdued to the lowest undertone:—

"Thanks and blessings upon thee and thy good aunt, maiden. Heaven surely directed me hither. Are you confident that I can be concealed here?"

"At least till my Cousin Guilford can think of some other place; and he will soon be in."

"And who is thy Cousin Guilford?"

"The son of my aunt; and though but a fisherman's son, and himself a fisherman, he is a true friend to the prince, and prays every night for his safety, as well as do I and my aunt."

"Thanks, thanks, maiden! This beverage will revive and make me forget my day's fatigues."

"Quick, sir cavalier—shut the trap down; I hear voices."

The stranger immediately closed the trap, and leaping to the floor from the table, the maiden removed it against the wall, and unbolting the door returned to the front room. Voices of men in loud talk were still heard outside.

"Didst give it to him?" asked her aunt.

"Yes, aunt; and he was so grateful and so civil spoken; and his hand, as he reached it down, was as fair as a born lady's."

"Without doubt; these court cavaliers do nought of work, being rich, but aid the king with their heads in council. How fortunate it was he did not come in when the soldiers were here!"

"Perhaps he was watching outside the window till they were away."

"But it was bold in him to come in when they had so lately left."

"Poor gentleman, aunt! Perhaps he had no other chance for safety. I have heard a story of a hunted deer, after being pressed from every covert, at length fly for shelter beneath the horse of the hunter. But here come the men."

"Now, Anne, let not our looks or manner or words betray to these soldiers that we have a secret to keep."

While the good woman was giving this piece of caution to her niece, the two parliamentary troopers came in, making noise enough with their heavy boots and jingling swords for half a score of modern dragoons.

"Well, mistress, we have been taking a survey of thy premises around, walking about thereof, as the Israelites circumvented the walls of Jericho; but, verily, not seven times, for we had no desire that thy walls should fall down, considering that we look for them to give us shelter for to-night. Here, maiden, take the sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

With this Broad-way, who had seated his unwieldy form upon a bench by the table, unbuckled his huge sword and handed it to Anne, who took it, though it required no little strength to lift it, with its iron scabbard, and hung it upon a wooden peg near the window.

"And take thou this fiery sword, lass, and put it on yonder becket," said Strait-gate, with a solemn, nasal drawl. "Phuff! verily, brother Broad-way, I smell the savor of strong waters, spiced with fragrance as the incense of Aaron, that flowed down his garment skirts unto."

"Yes, the flavor thereof ascendeth to my nostrils like the odors of the lily of the valley of many colors. Dame, whence ariseth this delectable odor?" asked Broad-way, snuffing the air of the room about him like a bull of Bashan; while Strait-gate, erect and thin-visaged, rolled his eyes on all sides to discover whence came this fragrance which had so greatly captivated their senses.

"It is but the fumes of a negus which I have been making. My son will be in soon, and as the night is something chilly, and as he has gone out without his supper, I would give him some refreshment when he comes in."

"Verily, thou art a mother in Israel," answered Broad-way. "Suppose thou regard-est me as thy son in Jacob and thy posterity in Abraham, and give me of the negus even, verily, as Jacob gave to Esau of the pottage when he was a-hungry."

Dame Graham rose at once, and taking from a small cupboard an earthen mug, which held about a quart, she poured from it into two cups all that she had reserved for Guilford of what she had made for the concealed guest.

The two soldiers had no sooner inhaled and tasted the drink, than they manifested their approbation of her skill in concocting agreeable potations.

"Verily," said Strait-gate, "this is richer than the wines of Judea and the dew of the little hills of Hermon."

"Yea, verily, it is the dew of Lebanon," answered Broad-way, with unction.

"The good dame must fill up the quart measure once more; for verily, with such strength as this giveth to the arm of a servant of the Lord, we shall overthrow our enemies and discomfit them!"

"Verily, brother Strait-gate, verily, till not a dry bone standeth in the valley of Ajalon. Come hither, maiden, for thou art fair and comely to look upon; come hither, and sit upon my knee, that I may discourse to thee touching the wiles of the devil and the temptations of this world of vanities."

"Nay, brother, the maiden will do better to sit where she is; for thou shouldst not put thyself in the way of evil, seeking to save others from perdition."

"Anne," said the good dame, "come hither and take this pail and go to the spring and fill it with water, that I may make more negus for these sons of Jacob."

Anne very willingly complied, and was not a little gratified when her aunt whispered to her as she gave her the bucket, "Remain without until thy cousin returns. These men will be rude to thee in their cups. There is water enough in the house without that thou art sent for."

"But they will be rude to thee."

"No, I fear them not, child. Keep thou away from them all thou canst."

"Marry come up, maiden!" said Broad-way, as she passed him; "stay and let me give thee a holy kiss."

"Yes, a kiss of peace, verily, maiden!" chimed in Strait-gate, with a hypocritical twang through his nose. "Dost thou not

remember the Scripture records that Isaac kissed Rebecca? Come hither, and let us kiss thee and talk to thee gravely of the vanity of youth and the perils of comeliness."

But Anne, blushing and terrified, bounded past the pious covenanters and gained the outside of the door. But she fled from the arms of the men of war to fall into the arms of a fine-looking youth of her own station, who was in the act of knocking for admission as she opened the door.

"Why, Robin!" she exclaimed, as she withdrew her form from his arms, which had inclosed her almost of necessity, so completely she came into them.

"And you, Anne! Whither with such haste? Oh, I see, you have the bucket. Let me fetch for thee."

"Nay, speak low, and come right away from the door. If you must talk, talk at the spring. There are two of those dreadful troopers in the house."

"What, Cromwell's brigands?" repeated the young fellow, in tones that rang like a Damascus blade.

"Hush!" she cried, pressing her small hand against his mouth to stop his words. "If you are overheard you are lost. Come with me, quick, and I will tell you all that has happened."

He took the pail from her, and followed her light step across a stile and into a remote corner of a paddock, where, beneath a clump of alders, bubbled a sparkling spring, with an abundance of water, which, overrunning, sought its way in a brooklet to the sea, five hundred yards off.

"You seem disturbed, Anne; have these troopers been insolent?" demanded the young man, who was plainly of a fiery temper, and had a profound regard for the maiden.

"When did you ever hear of these soldiers being beneath a roof that they were not insolent? Beshrew me! they would have kissed me if I would have suffered it of their ugly, great hairy mouths!"

"I will kill them both!"

"Nay, Robin, that would be to the death of three men—for assuredly thou wouldst be the third. They did not kiss me, however, for I ran away."

"The hounds! to presume to think of what I hardly dare dream of—pressing thy sweet lips!"

"Nay, Robin, don't talk of love now. You may stay here and keep me company

till Guilford comes home, if you will be sure to behave yourself."

"Ah, Anne, you are ever so cruel to me. Why do I woo and sue, and woo in vain?" said the young man, seating himself by her side on the stone bench that half encircled the spring. "Do you compel me to sigh for you, and love you, and live only with your thought, while you treat me so disdainfully?"

"I love you, Robin, but I do not love you yet well enough to be your wife. If I ever marry any one but—it shall be you."

"But who? Whose name fills the space you only breathed?"

"Do you not guess?" asked the ingenuous girl.

"I can think of no one but Guilford."

"You are right. It is Guilford who alone keeps me from loving you as you ought to be loved. I have nothing against you; I am grateful for selecting me out of all the maidens of the hamlet; but I do love Guilford."

"Only as a cousin?"

"I wish it were only as a cousin. I fear I love him with all my heart."

"Happy Guilford! He is my best friend—he destroys my happiness. But why do I ask the question? Who can help loving thee, Anne, that knows thee?"

"Frankly then, I fear he loves me only as

a cousin, and has no suspicion of my attachment for him. That makes me wretched. I fear his heart is pre-engaged."

"Would that it were."

"It would then break the dream of my life, and I should perhaps awake, Robin, to the realities of thy love. You see I am frank and open-hearted with you. Your long attachment for me demands frankness and the absence of all mystery."

"You are goodness itself! If, then, Guilford should be discovered to have given his heart to another, may I then hope, dearest Anne?"

"Yes; for there is no one next to him I think so highly of as you."

This undisguised expression of her feelings filled the young man with joy. He pressed her hand to his lips with devotion and ardor, and she could see that his features were animate with hope and joy.

As they sat by the spring they heard the voices of the two tipsy troopers singing through their noses a long-winded psalm, the sounds of which reaching the ears of other soldiers quartered about in other huts, inspired them also with devotional psalmody, and soon the whole village was roaring with a noise of singing, which came louder from the village inn than from any other quarter.

[To be continued.]

THE LANDLADY'S DAUGHTER

BY MRS. NORA MARBLE.

I DOUBT if a woman could be found upon the planet, who would have called Percy Wyant other than handsome, notwithstanding his blazé air, and the mocking glint in his sleepy eyes. To be sure he had not always been blazé, and it is safe to say no young man of his set had enjoyed the favors of the fair, nor danced attendance upon them more assiduously than had he when in the first flush of manhood.

To-night, as he paced his luxurious apartments, the look of ennui habitual to his face deepened, and he breathed an anathema upon life and all its vanities with an unction befitting a Solomon.

"Bah!" he exclaimed turning over a perframed card of invitation which lay upon a dainty onyx-topped, gilded table. "Balls! how I hate them! No, I shall not go," and thereupon, donning a comfortable dressing-gown, he sank into a fauteuil before the cheerful grate fire.

From the mantle above four pair of eyes looked down upon him, four pair of ruby lips smiled upon him, four beautiful faces flushed in the glow of the fire as his eyes coolly scanned their loveliness. With a reflective air, in which no shade of affection lingered, he gazed from one photograph to another, meting to each about the same modicum of admiration. Presently arising, he took from the mantle the four pictures, and placing them upon a stand near, leisurely continued his survey.

"Blue, black, gray and brown," he muttered half-lazily, "which shall it be? I really have no preference. Let me see if I recollect the language of colors."

After a time, with a cynical smile, he moved toward his writing-desk and seated himself before it.

A witching face had for the last few moments been peering between the portiere's which divided the ante-room from this snug little parlor, but which now disappeared, and soon a gentle knock was heard at the outer door.

"Come in," impatiently cried Mr. Wyant, laying down the pen which he had been thoughtfully poised above the paper.

The owner of the witching face—a girl

about the age of sixteen—demurely advanced.

"Oh!" said he, carelessly, "it is only you, Annette."

"If you please," said the girl flushing painfully at his words and tone, "mamma wishes to know if you desire tea served in your apartment or do you go out for the evening?"

"Blue, black, gray and brown," flitted through Percy Wyant's mind, as he gazed upon the girl's fresh face. "Come here, Annette."

Annette was only his landlady's daughter, whose shyness sometimes amused and sometimes nettled him.

The girl slowly and somewhat reluctantly advanced to his side.

"Which of these do you think would make me a good wife?" he questioned mockingly, directing her attention to the four photographs which he had placed before him.

"I don't know, sir," replied she, flushing and paling in a way which amused him. "I—I might judge better if I knew the color of their eyes."

"Oh," he smiled, "then the color in a fair lady's eyes has a meaning? Let me see what the color of yours may mean, Annette. Upon my word I don't know if I ever have seen them, you have such a confounded way of dropping your lids when you meet me. Look at me now, Annette, straight in the eyes."

He waited impatiently, noting with a sense of irritation the downcast lids, and the suspicion of moisture upon the sweeping brown lashes.

"Pshaw!" he at length exclaimed. "Why, Annette, not one of those ladies whose photographs you have looked upon but would gaze into my eyes by the hour if I should so much as hint it would give me pleasure. Blue, black, gray and brown," he quoted, "four pair of eyes as beautiful as one could desire."

"Yes, sir," assented Annette, gaining confidence, feeling his eyes were fixed upon the pictures. "I have often wondered which one of those beautiful ladies would be—your—your wife, Mr. Wyant."

"Why, bless my soul!" exclaimed he, meeting in full the limped sweetness of her violet-blue eyes. "Why, Annette, not one of the four can compare with you in beauty, not one. How old are you?" he asked after a pause, with sudden interest.

"Nearly seventeen," replied the blushing girl, turning to leave the room.

"And I have been treating you like a child," he said apologetically. "Seventeen! why you are a woman, Annette."

"And supper, sir?" was her only reply, moving backward into the shadows.

He was about to answer in the negative, but checked himself.

"Yes, if you please, at your mother's convenience."

After her departure, Percy Wyant sat down before his desk again, but the train of thought evidently had been broken beyond repair; the ink only dried upon the pen; not a stroke marred the glistening white of the paper.

"Blue, black, gray and brown," he repeated mechanically; but a keen observer would have noted how he lingered upon the first word, and how he fell to studying the face of the one crowned by golden tresses.

"The deuce," he exclaimed at last, "it is not such an easy task after all to make up one's mind to ask a woman to accept your name, and—and income," he added with that mocking light in his eyes. "I'll defer it until another day. The thought was only bred of my ennui and loveliness, perhaps, anyway."

A shade of disappointment clouded his brow, as the mother of Annette, attended by a daughter of Erin, presently entered with the supper.

"Confound it," he muttered, playing with the eatables for which he had no appetite, "I had hoped"—but not even to the empty room did he breathe what that hope had been.

The maid in due time came in, and proceeded to clear away the dishes.

"Sure," said she, surveying the almost untouched food, "yee's must be a livin' on love, sor, seein' as yee's found no victuals 'mong all these good things to tempt ye," upon which, with the utmost *sang froid*, she proceeded to strip a chicken leg of its flesh with her own sharp teeth.

"I knows," she went on, in a muffled voice, "I knows them same symptoms, for sure; seein' 'em, sor, as I do, ivery blissed day of me loife."

Receiving nothing but a cool stare from Mr. Wyant, which in no wise disconcerted her, she continued:—

"Yes, sor, there be Miss Annetty," she stopped here to dislodge something from her throat.

"Yes!" impatiently cried Mr. Wyant, suddenly awakening to interest. "Yes, my good girl, go on."

"How kin I be afther goin' on whin I'm chokin', bad cess to ye," exclaimed the girl with the utmost good humor, notwithstanding her words. "Well, as I was afther sayin', Miss Annetty," here she deftly flipped an oyster from its shell-like cavity in the dainty dish, "Miss Annetty is a sthricken example of that same love sickness; she is indade, sor."

"Oh!" said the gentleman with a frown, "and so Miss Annette has a lover, then?"

"A lover," exclaimed Biddy making a wry face at a piece of lemon which she had stuffed into her mouth, skin and all, "sure and would she afther be losin' her heart to a—an oyster?"—that figure coming to her aid most opportunely as she sent another bivalve down the way the lemon had gone.

Mr. Wyant bit his lip.

"It's cross yees are," went on the imperturbable Biddy. "I hope it 'll niver be the loikes of yees that Miss Annetty 'll be takin' fer a lover. Handsome is as handsome does, is my motto, as well as"—

"Bridget," called a sweet voice from the ante-room, "you stay too long. Mamma waits for you."

"I'd loike to know when she ain't afther waitin' for me," muttered the girl, tossing the dishes upon the tray with no gentle hand. "It's no chance I'm ivver gettin' for perlite conversation, at all, at all."

Crash went a bit of glass-ware.

"Now see what yees hurryin' has been afther doin', Miss Annetty," she cried, crossly.

Mr. Wyant, with unusual politeness, parted the curtains for the egress of the dish-laden girl, expecting as he did so another glimpse of a pair of sweet shy eyes; but Miss Annette had fled, and he turned back into the room with a muttered imprecation upon his own folly and everything in general.

The following evening—notwithstanding an engagement—found him again by his own cosey fireside, gazing intently upon those four pictured faces above him.

"Yes," he soliloquized, "I intend to marry, and I must choose a woman queen-like, and of undoubted position. But which?"

He was no egotist, this man, and had not reckoned without his host in assuming that either of those beautiful women, who smiled down upon him from the mantle, would be his simply for the asking. Yet not until within a few short hours ago had such an intention entered his mind. A sarcastic smile had curled his lip when a few days since a letter had come to him from his dearest friend and an inveterate woman-hater, a letter full of eulogy of one woman; of a joy which had changed his whole being.

"Why, my dear fellow," the letter had said, "I find there is something new in life. Think of it! something new for poor blazé, ennuied, cynical me. Think of my dry old heart putting forth young shoots, of my affections becoming green again—and all because a sweet, pure, unsophisticated maiden lifted a pair of shy eyes to mine, and said, 'I love you.'"

"A pair of shy eyes," repeated Percy Wyant, recalling those lines to-night, as he gazed from one pictured face to another above him, "a pair of sweet, shy eyes," but there was certainly no shy uplifting of eyelids in either of those confident faces, and he smiled at the conceit of a handsome, queen-like woman of the world as he must choose looking up at him with shy, timid glances.

A knock at the door.

All thoughts of those handsome faces faded from his mind, as he said with a happy intonation, "Come in!" and a smile such as was not usual rested upon his lip as he noted the hesitating step which only advanced half way into the room.

A blissful expectancy, strange and sweet caused him to sit immovable, waiting for that figure to advance and stand by his side as it had done the previous evening.

"Annette!" he at last whispered.

"Sure, and it's meself, sor, and not Miss Annetty at all, at all. I'm a hesitatin' from comin' in, by the same token as I was hurried in such an unsarymonious manner last evenin'. She's waitin', she is, now, t'other side ov the door. Will yees be afther wantin' supper, sor, in yees apartment?"

"Yes," shortly said the gentleman addressed; followed immediately by the question, "Who is at the other side of the door?"

"Annetty's mother, sure," and out bustled Biddy unconscious of the change which came over Mr. Wyant's countenance at her words.

He looked somewhat impatiently for the coming of the girl again after finishing his supper, all the while smiling sarcastically at himself for so doing.

"You did not tell me who was Miss Annette's lover?" he said with an attempt at jocosity when she at last appeared.

"Sure, and I did'nt," she answered, "for the simple raison that I ain't afther knowin' meself, sor."

"Then there is a lover?"

"Well, by me faith, there must be a man in the buisness, sence Miss Annetty is sufferin' from love sickness and not the maisels nor the mumps, sure. She has been afther mopin' the whole of this blessed day, and once I caught her a cryin', and a scribblin' on bits of paper, and then tearin' of 'em up. Here's one of them same bits now, sor," she added confidentially, withdrawing a piece of writing paper from her pocket and handing it to him.

He blushed with shame as he took it, but stifling all promptings of honor, eagerly cast his eye upon the few written words thereon.

"Blue, black, gray and brown. Which shall it be?"

Over and over were those few words written:—

"Blue, black, gray and brown!"

"I hope it ain't nothin' ye'es should'nt be afther radin'?" said Biddy with sudden compunction. "Seein' as how I couldn't make one bit ov sense out ov the whole thing; writin' bein' the same as Greek to me, sor, fer sure."

"No," he replied, tenderly folding up the bit of paper and depositing it in his vest-pocket, "no, 'tis of but little consequence, Bridget."

"I'm glad ov that same," she said, gathering up the dishes and pocketing any bits which struck her fancy, "fer the blessed child has had a sob in her voice the day, and whin her mother—bad cess to her—axed her to come and inquire of ye'es about supper, she shrunk, did Miss Annetty, loike as if somebody had been afther given her a blow."

"Blue, black, gray and brown," he repeated as he sank into his luxurious chair before the fire, "which shall it be?" But

his eyes sought only the glowing coals, and something within the picture there presented gave him pleasure, for the mocking light died from his face, and with a tender smile upon his lips, his head sank backward, and before many minutes, lulled by the sounds which came faintly from the streets below, Percy Wyant slept.

Scarcely an hour had passed when he awoke, dimly conscious of a stifling, burning sensation in throat and nostrils, and to find the room full of smoke, not dense, but penetrating in its odor of burning fabrics.

A soft voice from the ante-room was entreatingly calling his name.

"Mr. Wyant, O Mr. Wyant, are you at home?" it said.

An inarticulate murmur only reached her.

In a second, a slight form stood beside him, and a pair of delicate hands sought to drag him from his chair.

By the glow of the firelight he read in the tender depths of her sweet eyes, all that their blue-veined lids had so long sought to conceal.

"My darling!" he whispered drawing her to him. "My own sweet, shy Annette!"

She made no resistance, but like a frightened fawn he could feel her heart beating against his.

"The fire," she whispered. "I—I came to save you, Mr. Wyant."

"'Tis only the mantle lambrequin," he said, loath to arise and open the window; but when the smoke had at last melted into the outer air, he drew her attention to the four shrivelled photographs upon the mantle.

"See," he said with a tender smile, "see, Annette, how those four beautiful faces have been swept from my sight as well as mind to. Blue, black, gray and brown," he added, with a mischievous smile, "which shall it be?"

"Blue," suggested a faint voice from his shoulder.

"And why?" bending his stately head.

"Because"—a pair of the shyest, sweetest eyes upon earth were lifted to his—"because—I love you."

THE NYMPH OF THE GLEN.

By Helen Luqueer.

IT was a deep, dark, rugged glen where a stream wended its swift current over mossy stones, and whose banks were fringed with laurel, and the lovely green fern plumes, and whose upward sweep terminated in rugged cliffs, crowned with rustling hemlock and pines.

In it two gentleman friends were fishing, and as one held aloft a speckled beauty to be admired by his companion, a musical female voice from an overhanging rock exclaimed:—

"Lovely! Hold it up a moment longer, please."

Glancing upward in astonishment, Harry Esterbrook saw through a network of foliage, a fair young face, whose color reminded him of milk and roses, out of which beamed a pair of soft, dark eyes, and with a head crowned by an abundance of fluffy golden hair. He also noted the lines of a very shapely figure in a half-kneeling position, supporting upon one knee a sketch book, and the swift glancing of a white hand, as the owner thereof sketched the fish he had been so unceremoniously bidden to hold aloft.

Rapidly and skillfully moved the fingers, while the pretty head turned with infinite grace, now intent upon her work, and now upon the scene below.

"There that will do. Thanks," was exclaimed, and before Harry had time to interfere or realize the irksomeness of his position, the girl had uttered her laconic courtesy, and was gone.

"Whew!" whistled young Marlow. "Talk of nymphs!"

"I should think as much," returned Harry, dropping the fish, and scrambling up the steep bank to the spot where the unknown divinity had disappeared, but only to find a handful of half-withered wild flowers and a blue ribbon, which evidently had served to bind back her golden tresses.

"How upon earth could she have disappeared so quickly?" thought he, pausing to listen for some sound of retreating steps or rustling garments, but only the murmuring of the wind, the whispering leaves, the glad song of birds, and the babbling of the brook reaches his ears.

A shout and a derisive laugh from his friend recalled him to his senses, and he scrambled down again to be received with a fire of raillery.

"Say, old fellow," exclaimed Marlow, how you did seize and swallow the bait. hey?"

"I don't understand."

"Why, that pretty tableau gotten up by a party of girls on purpose to start a flirtation."

"I saw only one, Fred, and"—

"Bah! I'll wager this Arcadia is infested with city boarders, and that we have been tracked, and you ensnared."

"I think you are mistaken. The lady was certainly an artist-enthusiast, and forgot the proprieties in her desire to reproduce the picture."

"That is all sheer nonsense. She could never have caught even the outlines, much less a picture, in that brief moment."

"Well, whoever she was, or what her purpose, hers was the fairest, loveliest face I ever looked upon."

Marlow groaned as he saw Harry deposit the blue ribbon within his vest, and next his heart, and exclaimed:—

"Done for my boy, done for! I shall expect to see you exchange angling for speckled beauties, to that of the nymph of the glen. But keep up heart. She is a woman, and curiosity will bring her back to-morrow."

"Heaven grant it," laughed Harry Esterbrook, as he reeled up his line. "The sun is down, and I am as hungry as a hunter, so we will hasten back to Mother Kouse and her smoking supper."

"Mother Kouse" was proprietress of a lovely backwoods farm at almost the end of civilization amid the wilds of the hills of New York. But her abode had become quite the resort of gentlemen tourists, especially those who were given to piscatory sports. Consequently young Marlow and Esterbrook were passing their vacation from city turmoil, dust, and duty in the rude and isolated place.

Daily they frequented the glen where they had seen the young artist, and to Harry, at least, it was a source of disap-

pointment that she came no more, or that by questioning old Mrs. Kouse never so much he failed to learn anything concerning her.

One day, however, some weeks latter subsequent to their episode in the glen they again saw the lady, and this time followed by a huge Newfoundland dog. As he neared them Marlow exclaimed, but under his breath:—

"As predicted, Harry, here is your"—

"Hiat!" returned his companion, quite pale with excitement.

The path was a narrow one and rough, and instinctively Esterbrook stepped aside to admit the passage of the lady and her noble attendant, and doffing his hat as they approached. But instead, going forward the girl paused, and said:—

"I beg your pardon, sirs. I came to show you my picture of yourselves and the glen."

As she spoke, she opened a portfolio she carried for inspection. The gentlemen drew near as she hastily turned the leaves, and discovered a sketch that brought an exclamation of admiration from both bearded lips. There was the glen, dark, deep and full of shadows, Marlow, true to life, sitting on a rock patiently awaiting a nibble, with Esterbrook standing upon some water-kissed stones in mid-stream holding aloft a trout over which a stray sunbeam was playing, having stolen its way through the network of foliage, and so forth, to brighten the scene.

The sketch was, indeed, one of great truth and beauty, and full of spirit, and Esterbrook exclaimed:—

"It is very striking and truthful."

"And you have done us great honor," added Marlow, fixing upon her admiring but somewhat bold glances.

She turned from him, and addressing Esterbrook said:—

"I hope I may be excused for venturing to meet you. Indeed, I fear it is not just right, but I wish to ascertain if such sketches have any value, that is, if they can command any price."

"Indeed, yes," Harry responded, with deferential enthusiasm. "I was just wishing to become the owner of this little gem at any cost."

"Oh, thanks! It was not for the purpose of selling it that I came, but"—the color deepened in her cheeks, while her soft, dark

eyes modestly sought the ground—"but to learn if there was any place in the great cities where one could find a market for such simple sketches from nature?"

"Certainly, if one had some disinterested friend to sell them, such, for instance, as my companion," broke in Marlow, though rather intent upon teasing Harry than assisting the girl.

But instinctively catching soom hidden meaning in the glance of his laughing eyes, she flushed up to the very temples, while the instinct of her great dog told him that his young mistress needed his care, and he crowded close to her side, and showing sharp and ugly teeth, uttered a low growl.

Harry Esterbrook turned one swift lightning glance of reproof upon his friend, and then, disregarding his speech, explained to the young lady the course she would have to pursue in order to sell her productions, and taking out his note-book wrote for her a few addresses.

The girl expressed her thanks in well-chosen words, and finished by saying, with a most bewitching smile:—

"I am such a little barbarian of the backwoods that I know very little of the traffic of the great world, and I thank you exceedingly, sir, for your kindness and advice. You have placed me under great obligation; and, but for my needs, I fear I should never have had the courage to come to you at all."

"I am glad to have been even of the least service to you, and would own the favor more than repaid would you sell me this little sketch," returned Esterbrook.

She lifted questioning eyes to his face for a moment, and reading truth and sincerity in the handsome, manly features, answered:

"Indeed, sir, it is of little value to me, and you are welcome to it."

"I could not accept it without some remuneration, he urged, taking from her the picture, and leaving in her little hand a bank-note for a considerable amount. Then he added:—

"Should this sketch bring you other orders to whom shall I address them?"

The girl hesitated, blushed, and replied:—

"Marcha Martin, at Brookville post-office. Thanks. Good-afternoon."

She swept a graceful courtesy to Esterbrook, and disdaining even a glance toward Marlow, turned away, and, followed by her great dog, disappeared down the windings of the brook path.

"Not a very high-sounding name, and Brookville is at least ten miles away," exclaimed Marlow, bursting into a laugh. "Very unsophisticated for one who talks so prettily and gracefully. Trust me, old fellow, she is an accomplished humbug."

"She is a lady!" answered Harry wrathful, "and you treated her with anything but politeness or consideration. If I were a gentleman"—

"Never mind, old boy, you are struck bad, that's plain, but don't let's quarrel. I contend that this Marcha Martin is some city flirt out on a lark, and that her education and manners do not in the least fit her name or station or habitation, and that she will turn out to be Mrs. or Miss Angelica Fitzsomething."

Marlow's raillery became quite boisterous, when, upon inquiry, no such person as Marcha Martin was known by Mother Kouse, and she declared she "guessed she knowed everybody in that here community."

One night toward the end of their sojourn with her, the old lady appeared at the door of their chamber bearing a lamp in her hand, and arousing both from sound slumber to the consciousness that a terrible storm was raging without.

"I want to know is one of ye," she said, "will git up, and go with me to Leslie's? The boy what come after me, says the old man is struck dead, and she is in an awful way all alone with him."

The request was screamed even above the roar of the tempest, and, setting down her lamp, she departed, taking it for granted that common humanity would prompt her gentlemen boarders to give assistance at the call of distress.

"Who is old Leslie, and who is she?" questioned Marlow in accents of disgust.

"It makes no difference," answered Harry, springing up and hastily dressing.

"All right, old fellow, but I don't belong to the modern philanthropist school, and so will sleep while you are being drenched in searching for some old hag of a woman to comfort. As for the old man struck dead, may his soul rest in peace."

Marlow turned over for a final nap as his friend donned a mackintosh and hastened down the narrow and dark stairs.

At their foot he met Mrs. Kouse ready for the tedious walk of half a mile through the storm.

"I thought it would be you," she said.

She led the way, followed by Harry and the boy who carried a lantern, which feebly lighted the path. After a weary march they came to a little red cottage (perched upon the hillside) of rather a dilapidated appearance, though in the gloom neither that nor the neatly kept flower garden that surrounded were apparent.

Mother Kouse led the way to the back of the house and through the kitchen door into a tiny sitting-room, out of which opened a bed-room. In it burned a bright lamp, disclosing the still, rigid form of one who had commenced the sleep of death, and also that of a solitary figure kneeling by his side.

At the touch of Mother Kouse, she arose to her feet, and turning a sad, white face upon them, disclosed to the startled young gentleman the lovely features of the nymph of the glen.

The next morning when the storm had spent itself, and the glad sun brightened the refreshed hills, Harry Esterbrook entered their chamber, and aroused his companion.

"Well, old fellow," said Marlow, sitting up with many a yawn, and rubbing his eyes, "have you buried the old man and comforted the ancient relict?"

"No, but I have found the lady who made the sketch of us in the glen."

"Hal! And so Miss Marcha was not a nymph after all?"

"And a lady of culture and refinement who has traveled in many land and studied under famous masters."

"Whew! Just as I told you, she was masquerading."

"You are mistaken. It was chance that threw her in our way, and necessity that drove her to consult us. Stranded in these wilds where three years since she came for a summer with her invalid father, and where he was stricken with that living death, paralysis, they rented a little tenant cottage belonging to the Kouse farm, and have lived, not existed, ever since. The last stroke came even as their last penny was gone, and left the poor young thing fatherless and desolate."

"How romantic! I believe I will valse in myself and play benefactor."

Esterbrook turned upon his friend with a searching rebuke that sobered and silenced him.

"Well, joking aside, what can be done for her? I am not so bad a fellow as you think."

"She will accept no assistance from us, and has planned with Mother Kouse to sell their few effects and go to the city, where she intends to support herself by her art."

"Poor, deluded thing!" murmured Marlow.

"Well, I can waste no more time. I have breakfasted and must return to Mr. Leslie's."

"Not Martin then?"

"No, she gave a fictitious name. But I am off, so take care of yourself."

In a little studio opposite the little sitting-room Harry found Miss Marian Leslie. She was calm, but with evidences of many

tears about her pretty brown eyes that touched the tender heart of the young fellow inexpressibly, and the intonations of his voice and gentleness of manner spoke of the kindest sympathy.

When all was over, her dead shut forever out of her sight, she gladly accepted the escort of Mrs. Kouse's boarder to her new home in the city, where her struggles for livelihood soon ended in that of wifehood, for Harry Esterbrook was too madly in love to be denied, and Marlow declares that search as he may or where there will never again be found such another "Nymph of the Glen."

THE OLD FLUTE-PLAYER.

By Anne T. Wilbur.

IN the fourteenth century, there was in the principal city of Kolenberg a large town called Hamelen. Built at the confluence of the Hamel and Weser, it received its port ships from all countries, and afterwards distributes their cargoes throughout Germany. It was noted everywhere for its commerce, its wealth, its power; and the man who could say, "I am a citizen of Hamelen," was sure of finding everywhere protection or civility. So the inhabitants had become hard, unjust and proud, as it usually happens with those who can do whatever they desire.

Now, there entered one day into the port a foreign vessel, of a construction so singular that the most experienced sailors could not tell where it had been built. It moved without sails or oars, and its cargo was composed of precious merchandise, such as silken stuffs, perfumed leather, gold dust and oriental spices. One single man constituted the crew. It was an old man with white hair, clad in a robe of yellow velvet, fastened by a woolen girdle, and carrying suspended to his neck by a silver chain, two flutes, one of which was of ivory and the other of ebony.

All the inhabitants of Hamelen hastened, as we may imagine, to see the strange vessel and the unknown captain who commanded it. The latter received his visitors kindly; but to all their questions replied that he had come to do business with them, and not to relate his history, and he pointed to his merchandise spread out on the deck.

Nevertheless all went away without purchasing, and each made his own supposition on the mysterious stranger, some said that it must be some oriental Jew, whom the desire of gain had attracted to these remote regions; others asserted that he had come from India, pursuing an unknown route by the north; some suspected him to be a pirate who had enriched himself by getting rid of all his companions.

This last opinion prevailed because it was the most unfavorable one. It spread throughout the city, and it was soon universally believed that the old man with the flutes (as they called him) was a skimmer of the seas, who sought to sell the fruit of his

piracies. Some of the inhabitants then ventured to say that it would be prudent to interrogate this man, in order to learn the truth; others insisted that they had even a right to arrest him; at last, a merchant, who feared that his business would be injured by the stranger, exclaimed that the wisest course would be to seize his merchandise as the property of a suspected man. This last opinion was immediately adopted by everybody. They addressed the council who then governed Hamelen, and some of the magistrates were despatched to the ship in order to seize its contents.

The old man in vain attempted to oppose them, remonstrating that they despoiled him without reason and contrary to all justice; the magistrates replied that the merchandise should be restored when he had proved that it belonged to him lawfully, threatening, if he refused, to throw him into prison.

The stranger then comprehended that they were determined not to listen to him; he therefore seated himself beside the helm, and offered them to remove the cargo, without saying a word. At last when everything had gone, he arose, detached a rope which moored the ship, and allowed it to descend the stream.

The curious crowd had assembled to see him depart, and the magistrates themselves had remained near. The old man, who perceived them, bent over the side of the ship.

"I am going, unjust men!" said he, in a threatening tone; "I am going, driven away and despoiled by you; but I leave behind me what will punish you and avenge me."

At these words he opened a red bag which he carried at his girdle, and they saw come out of it three rats of different species. They jumped into the river, swam across it and reached the shore; after which the ship continued its course.

The inhabitants contented themselves with laughing at the singular vengeance of the old man, but they soon discovered that it was a serious one. The rats multiplied so prodigiously that they ended by taking possession of the whole city. They had driven all domestic animals from the houses, and made their nests in the corners of the

windows, in the places once occupied by swallows. Scarcely was a table set, when they all ran to eat the repast prepared for the family. They penetrated by innumerable companies into the granaries, consuming in a few days the food which should have sufficed for a year. The result was a famine, which rendered them more dangerous by making them more hungry. They spread throughout Hamelen, destroying all the merchandise, and gnawing all the sails and cordage of the shipping. Afterwards they attacked the beams of the houses, which began to fall into ruins, at last, the rage of hunger which tormented them became such, that they even attacked men during their sleep, and devoured infants in the cradle.

The inhabitants who had vainly employed all known means, were at a loss how to escape this calamity. Their warehouses were empty, and foreign vessels no longer dared to enter the port. It would have been all over with Hamelen, had not the council resolved to offer a reward of a hundred thousand gold pieces to him who could deliver the city from the animals.

This notice had already been published for some time, and no person had yet presented himself, when one day, a ship without sails reappeared, commanded by the old man with the two flutes. He did not enter the port, but sent to the supreme council a letter in which he proposed to deliver Hamelen from the scourge which he had sent upon it, for the hundred thousand gold pieces offered. After having heard it, the magistrate hastened to the port and summoned the old man to land, declaring that they would pay him the sum if he had really power to save them. The old man, confiding in this oath, landed, and taking his ivory flute, began to traverse the streets of Hamelen, playing a singular air, unlike any known music. As he played the rats ran toward him from every direction and followed him like an army; when they had thus assembled, he returned to the port and made them all enter his ship, which departed alone and quickly disappeared at the mouth of the river, then turning towards the magistrates, he said to them:—

“You see I have kept my promise; now keep yours.”

But the magistrates, having no longer anything to fear, began to find reasons for violating their pledged word.

“The compensation,” said one of them, “ought to be proportioned to the trouble, and an air on a flute cannot reasonably be estimated at a hundred thousand gold pieces.”

“Give him two hundred, and he ought to think us generous,” added a second.

“Two hundred!” repeated the merchant who had finally advised the confiscation of the old man’s cargo; “have you forgotten that this man is the cause of all our sufferings?”

“True!” exclaimed all voices.

“Far from being indebted to him, we ought to inflict a severe chastisement,” resumed the merchant; “let him esteem himself fortunate for being allowed to depart without having been called to an account for the past; for our pardon is a sufficient recompense.”

The old man remained standing in the same spot, until the last of the inhabitants had crossed the door of the council-room; then, seizing his ebony flute, he cried in a terrible voice: “Let them be rewarded according to their words!”

Then he began to traverse the streets of Hamelen, playing his black flute, and this time all the children came out of the houses, and began to follow him, drawn by an irresistible power. He passed thus before each door, and his company constantly increased; finally, when it was complete, he turned towards the river.

Meanwhile, the inhabitants were praying in the church; but suddenly a gloomy voice resounded beneath its vaults, saying: “The curse of the fathers shall be punished in their children.”

And rising in terror; for they had recognized the voice of the old man, they issued forth in crowds and hastened to the port; the old man was no longer there; but every wave of the river rolled to the shore the corpse of one of their children.

A chapel was built in commemoration of this great disaster. On the windows were painted mothers in tears, traversing the shores of the Weser, in the midst of which appeared little heads floating and little hands elevated to demand help; in the distance was the old man playing the ebony flute, and beneath it was written: “To our children, destroyed by the malice of the demon.”

But the same evening an invisible hand effaced, it is said, the last words of this inscription, and the next day the inhabitants read: “To our children, destroyed because of the injustice of their fathers.”